to open talks with Voulet. This poor political judgment cost him his crown. Binger had been preceded in Ouagadougou by Dr. Krause, who in 1885 was the first European allowed to enter the capital; Von François, coming from German Togoland in 1887, was stopped at the first Mossi village. As already mentioned, Binger, not without difficulty, managed to reach Ouagadougou in 1888. He stayed there for some time, longer than he had wished, and it was by virtue of his admirable energy that he was able to resume his journey toward the south. In 1890 Dr. Crozat was received for the first time by the Moro Naba, but he had to leave Ouagadougou speedily. The following year Monteil did not even manage to reach the capital. He was stopped a few kilometers from it and forced to depart abruptly. The mulatto Fergusson, in the service of the British, reached Ouagadougou by way of Tenkodogo, Nyaogo, and Kombisgri. Von Carnap, a German, came from Sansané-Mango in 1897 and visited Tenkodogo and Koupéla.

Such are, in brief outline, the verified contacts of the Mossi with Europeans. Were they already known by John II of Portugal, and even by John III, in the sixteenth century? Did they come from far to the east, from Sokoto, Bornu, perhaps even from Wadai? There are so many questions that seem quite mysterious to us in the present state of our knowledge of these peoples of the bend of the Niger, who lack written traditions. Lt. Marc discusses at great length the various opinions on this subject in his book, Au pays des Mossi /In Mossi Country/, chapters 1 and 7. Delafosse presents his own opinion in his work on Upper Senegal and Niger (especially in volume 2). We shall limit this account to the traditions gathered from the natives themselves.

Our working method, indeed, has been to question as many natives as possible and to gather their statements on all matters which seemed of interest. We have avoided any "interpretation" of the facts. We have allowed the natives to talk, to tell their story, to describe /3/ their customs, to explain the phenomena of nature and of life as they understand them. Our role was limited to a day-to-day record of what we heard, to the inducement of explanations, to the arrangement of these notes. Of course, our questions sometimes remained unanswered. We shall leave them unanswered here. Having no plan to defend, we hope to have been sufficiently objective.

We shall, nevertheless, be happy if this modest work makes a small contribution to the study of regional history, so heavily stressed

114 today; if it provides ethnography with new materials; if it makes the native better known to missionaries, administrators, officers, colonists, and merchants, and thus better understood; and if cordial relations between the native and ourselves are thereby facilitated. Railroads will soon open up and profoundly modify the country. While there is still time, let us hasten to record the mentality of this people in its primitive form. We were able to gather data which we believe reflect the truth quite closely, thanks to the circumstances of our stay in Mossi country: ten consecutive years among its people, of which seven were spent in Koupéla; a knowledge of the language sufficient to maintain a running conversation on any subject whatever with the natives; and the close contact into which our ministry brought us with the village inhabitants. We shall be the first to acknowledge, however, that errors may have crept in here and there. It is very difficult to obtain a precise piece of information, and several natives questioned on the same subject often gave different answers. We were forced to make choices, and although we always tended to adopt the story which appeared to offer the greatest number of safeguards, we may have been wrong at times.

It must not be forgotten that our goal is not to provide a complete record of Mossi manners and customs. This was not possible, it would have been onerous, and we did not feel that it was necessary in order to present what we consider to be a generally accurate over-all picture of these people. Truthfulness compels us to point out that these materials were gathered for the most part in the province of Koupéla and, therefore, bear the impress of that locality. Our fellow-workers in Ouagadougou were kind enough to provide us with some information, but we were unable to obtain any data on the Yatenga region. God permitting, we shall round out these notes in a more comprehensive work.

101 Before we broach our subject, one remark is in order. It has be-
104 come usual to speak of the Mossi, of a Mossi, of the Mossi language, as though the word did not vary. We shall follow this custom and always write "Mossi" in the singular and in the plural, although the true name of this people is Moaga, plural Mosé. Likewise, we have spelled geographical names in accordance with the practice of the Administration, so as to avoid the appearance of wishing to reform everything.

000 May we thank here all those from far and near who have helped us with this work, and especially those who have contributed the interesting photographs that illustrate it.

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1. Actually, these "Arab chroniclers" is simply Es-Sadi, the author of Tarikh-es-Soudan /History of Sudan/, who wrote as late as the seventeenth century. As a matter of fact, it was the Portuguese writer, the great historian and geographer, Jean de Barros, author of l'Asia (1552-53), who was the first to reveal the existence of the Mossi in the sixteenth century. Léon, the African, did not know of them, nor did the Arab geographers and historians of the Middle Ages. Let us add that one should verify exactly in the area whether the Mossah resemble the Mossi other than by name. The matter has become relatively easy since the French occupation of the Cameroons.

171 Captain Lambert adds in a note:
174 "A new question arises here: can one consider the Mossi as being autochthonous to Bornu, or should their long stay in that region be considered as a step in the great migratory movement that, in successive phases, has brought them to the heart of the Niger estuary?

"In the present state of our knowledge, it would be unwise to take a firm position. We shall merely show that the feudal system that characterizes the political constitution of the Mossi can be compared to the system prevalent in Abyssinia. The hierarchical set-up seems to be identical in certain respects; leaders are appointed under analogous conditions, and the election of the Negus is accompanied by a period of anarchy which we also find here and which seems to go back to ancient traditions.

174 "It may well be that this goes beyond pure coincidence. While
197 we were in the process of editing a small dictionary of the Mossi language, we took the trouble to find out whether the dialects spoken in Abyssinia were likely to give us some clues on this point. We must admit, however, that the vocabularies of the Galla, Ahmaris /sic/, and Tigré languages that we consulted have not provided us /3/ with convincing arguments. But it is a proven fact today that, from the

viewpoint of ethnographic research, text similarities do not mean very much, and idioms that are not fixed by writing may, within a few centuries, become deformed to the extent of being unrecognizable. While the value of grammatical comparisons is much more important, we have unfortunately had neither the time nor the means to make use of this method. We will, therefore, merely indicate this point of view which, in our opinion, could lead to fruitful observations. On the other hand, missionaries have claimed that the Mossi traditionally would have preserved the symbolic notion of the Christian cross, a fact we have been unable to verify and which, without being impossible a priori, seems unlikely."

After this parenthesis about the distant origins of the Mossi, Captain Lambert continues:

"It is indeed highly probable, and here again, lacking written documents, we have only oral traditions to base our opinions on, that the Mossi people, split up by the impact of a Moslem invasion from the east, must have, through successive waves and losing ground in the opposite direction, spread further toward the west, so that the Mossi-bé (1), who still form several agglomerations in the western

1. Mossi-bé is simply the plural of the word Mossi in Peuhle /Peul/ language.

part of Sokoto and even in the Dounzou circle and who also show striking analogies with the Mossi proper, can also be used as a reference. (Captain Lambert adds in a note: "Among the Mossi-bé we find the circumflex accent which would complete the ethnic tatooing of the Mossi as it is today. This mark rightly belongs to the natives of the left bank of the Niger river up to the angle formed by the Dollol-Maouri.") These agglomerations indicate, in a very approximate fashion, the location of the Mossi empire at the historical period that evidently marks its apogee of power; toward 1350, as we saw /4/ in the Tarikh, Timbuktu was conquered by the sultan of Mossi."

The incident to which Captain Lambert refers here is the conquest of Timbuktu by the Mossi (in 1333 exactly, according to the most advanced calculations) (1), which is mentioned by Es-Sadi in

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1. See the book by Lieutenant Marc, Le Pays Mossi /The Land of the Mossi/, pp. 136-138. The author sets the date of the fall of Timbuktu to the Mossi at 1333 or 1334. Delafosse, in his book Haut-Sénegal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/, took the date of 1333. Binger (op. cit. Vol. I, pp. 481, 482) gives the date of 1329 according to the Tarikh, but assumes it to be wrong and that it was in 1326 that the Mossi, who he says were then part of the kingdom of Mali, captured Timbuktu for the sake of and by the order of the Mali kings. We know now that this assumption is false, that the Mossi were never under the domination of Mali, and that they sacked Timbuktu on their own behalf in 1333. Besides, the Malinké recaptured Timbuktu fairly soon thereafter and held it until 1433, at which time the leader Targui Akil took possession. The Mossi expedition against Timbuktu was, everything considered, nothing more than a raid, perfectly executed, but without any follow-up.

the Tarikh-es-Soudan /History of Sudan/; but one cannot conclude, as Captain Lambert does, that in the fourteenth century the Mossi were still living on the east bank of the Niger River, in what today is Djerma, and that they had not yet reached, at that time, the Mossi of today, nor even the Dagomba, and that it was from Djerma that they conducted their triumphant raid on Timbuktu. If the Mossi really did come from Bornu and ended up in Dagomba, and, as is only natural, spread on to Haoussa and Djerma (2), they did so in the very

2. As a matter of fact, one can explain the Mossi colonies of Sokoto as having come from the regions of Ouagadougou, Yatenga, or Fada N'Gourma at a relatively recent date, the thirteenth, fourteenth, or fifteenth centuries.

914 distant past, since we must place Rawa, the first conqueror of
174 Ouagadougou and Ouahigouya (see further on), in the twelfth century A. D., and his parents came from Dagomba where it is clear the Mossi have lived for some time. The crossing of Haoussa and Djerma by the forefathers of the Dagomba Mossi takes us back to a period that obviously cannot be precisely established, but which is definitely earlier than the fourteenth century (when the Mossi conquered Timbuktu), and one must recognize, contrary to Captain Lambert's opinion, that the Mossi who took Timbuktu came from the south (probably from Ouahigouya) and not from the east (the Say region). We would like to point out /5/ also that they were a great deal closer to Timbuktu in Ouahigouya than in Say. Once this point has been cleared up and the ensuing mistakes corrected, the plausibility of the discovery of the road followed by the Mossi who came from Bornu (if they came from there), which was re-traced by Captain Lambert, is acceptable.

These observations also apply to the continuation of Captain Lambert's report. He says that the wars waged by the second Songhaï empire against the Mossi (sixteenth century) forced the latter to leave the Djerma country to go southwest toward Dagomba. Obviously, all of this is quite inaccurate, but, without accepting Captain Lambert's cause for the emigration and his establishing it further in the past, we can accept the route he traces.

174 "This movement," says Captain Lambert, speaking of the march from Djerma to Dagomba, "took place in a southerly direction, and the Mossi, after having followed the Niger River, crossed it at a point located between Say and Ilo, but much closer to Ilo.

[301] "North of Ilo, the custom of shaving the heads of the chieftains'
[302] wives still persists. These women also wear metal leggings (1), par-

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1. Captain Lambert undoubtedly is referring to the beautiful copper leggings, about 20 centimeters high, worn by the rich Mossi women.

ticularly characteristic of the Mossi peoples and sometimes encountered among peoples who have been in contact with them.

"From this point, the migration, leaving the Bariba country on the left (2), went in a straight line through Gourma and the Pama region

114 Captain Lambert adds in a note: "According to Colonel M.-P. Northcott, the founder of the Gambakha dynasty was called Tosogo; but the information that he provides about him seems hardly in agreement with the tradition we are relying upon here." (See Report on the Northern Territories of the Gold-Coast, London, 1890).

Captain Lambert continues as follows:

"The creation of the actual Mossi empire came later; it is nevertheless safe to assert that from that period on, some of the new inhabitants of Mampoursi undertook to open a passage toward the north and achieved it in two different ways. One group, after leaving Gambakha, pushed the Boussanga back into the region they occupy today and reached Béloussa country where they spread toward the west and north, occupying a vast stretch of land which is today almost exclusively inhabited by the Mossi. The other group, blazing a path in Nankana country, went north of Tiébélé and pushed the Boussanga back from the opposite side, thus crushing them in a vice, so to speak, and spread out in the country circumscribed by the Red Volta, toward Ouagadougou.

"One has only to glance at a map of the Mossi country to recognize the direction of these two parallel movements which came together north of the present-day Boussangsé, an almost uninhabited region at the time of the great Mossi migration. It was there that the autochthonous Boussanga, who were then occupying the whole Tenkodogo country, were forced to find refuge and have since been just existing, hostile to any fusion with the invader."

173 Captain Lambert then goes on to the legend of the origins of the true Mossi empire:

"A naba of the Gambakha (the Gambakha, as we have seen, were directly descended from the leader who had led the great immigration to the Mampoursi River), having reached the end of his life without an heir, believed this fact to be a fulfillment of destiny. Nothing in this world is permanent, and doubtless his glorious dynasty had to make way for a new line of leaders. He was at least resigned to this, but his lonely old age was what saddened him above all else. He therefore implored the spirits to give him a child, pronouncing the solemn vow that he would dedicate it to virginity, whether it be a boy or girl. As if by a miracle, a girl was born to him at once. He called her Pogotoenga (woman of the tree) (1), considering her, therefore, from

174 country of Gambaga?" he asks (op. cit., p. 134). "It is rather difficult to /10/ speak authoritatively on this subject: probably from the central African Sudan, the region of the Chad. All Mossi traditions are unanimous in placing their country of origin very far in the east . . ."

Lieutenant Marc had already said on page 130, "Local traditions have it that the Mossi come from very far in the east. Very long ago, they occupied a country located beyond the Niger River, whose capital was called Aliaman. This country is presently inhabited by the Songhai. Then the Mossi came to live in Dagomba, defeated its inhabitants, and the leader of the Mossi settled in Gambaga." (1)

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1. There follows the legend of the daughter of the king of Gambakha. She is wrongly called Ouidiraogo, "stallion," as in Dr. Ruelle's version. Lieutenant Marc goes on to make another mistake by saying that Ouidiraogo means "hoof" (instead of male horse). Zoungourana (whom Lieutenant Marc calls Zoungourouma or Zougourouma) is presented here, as he was by Dr. Ruelle, as the second husband of the daughter of the king of Gambakha and as a Boussansé king. In Lieutenant Marc's version, he "waged war against his father-in-law and conquered the whole country from Gambaga to Koupéla." Then "Zougourouma had three sons: Séré, Oubri, and Couda. The first became naba of Boussouma; the second, Naba Oubri, conquered the country of Ouagadougou, set up his capital there, and took possession of Yatenga. Naba Oubri is considered by the Mossi as the first of the Moro-naba and founder of the present dynasty. His successors were his brother Couda, and then his son Nigamenda."

174 In this tradition reported by Lieutenant Marc, there is obviously an element of Moslem imaginations; Aliaman probably designates

174 Yemen. But the indication that this country is presently inhabited by the Songhay /sic/ certainly points to Djerma or Zaberma, slightly east of the Niger River in the Say and Dosso region. By dissociating the Moslem legend (undoubtedly created by some Yarsé Moslem of the Mossi) from the rest of the tale, one still comes back to the temporary and distant occupation of Djerma by the ancestors of the Mossi.

174 114 Delafosse, on the other hand, contrary to Dr. Ruelle, Captain Lambert, and Lieutenant Marc, although, like the others, he has the Mossi come from Dagomba to their present habitat (see Haut-Sénégal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/, Vol. I, pp. 305-310), seems disinclined to accept the idea of an eastern origin. He says (page 310, in a note), "Lieutenant Marc seems to want to attribute an eastern 174 origin to the Mossi. To strengthen his hypothesis, he says that the 171 organization of the court of the Morho nâba (emperors of the Mossi) 644 is unique in western Africa, while there are /11/ equivalents in 114 Haoussa, Bornu, etc. I should like to point out that this argument is of little value, precisely because, contrary to Lieutenant Marc's theory, one finds in all ancient states of western Africa (Ghana, Mali, Tekrour, Gao, Dahomey, Benin, etc.) an organization absolutely analogous to that of the Mossi court (see part IV of this work and compare with the reports of Arab geographers and early European 174 travelers)." Of course I agree with Delafosse in not finding Lieutenant 114 Marc's argument very penetrating (1), but Ruelle, Lambert, and

1. Here is the argument as developed by Lieutenant Marc (op. cit., p. 134, 135):

"The feudal organization of the Mossi country, the court of the Moro-Naba, its pages, and its eunuchs, are all unique in western Africa. On the other hand, the black monarchs, as they are known in central Africa, seem to live in a setting that greatly resembles the one in which the Moro-Naba lives. The sultans of Zinder, Bornu, and Wadai have also a court, eunuchs, and pages. The little we know about the organization of their empires seems rather similar to what we have seen among the Mossi. But our

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documentation on this matter is not extensive enough to enable us to attempt a comparative study."

Marc do not base themselves exclusively on this argument. They also use a tradition of the Mossi themselves, and it would doubtless be unwise to reject it without examining it further. An argument that could be cited in favor of a very ancient occupation of Djerma by the ancestors of the Mossi is Binger's following remark: "The Mossi must have remained in contact with the Touareg /Tuareg/ for a fairly long time (2) ... since they partially adopted their dress and use, as they do, the cAutch-handled [poignée en CROIX] saber."

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2. In this quotation, I have omitted the word "after," since Binger assumes that the Mossi, after taking Timbuktu in 1326 by order of the Mali, remained there until 1433, having, therefore, one century of contact with the Touareg. In reality, the Mossi stayed in Timbuktu only a very short time, and this raid could not have given them a prolonged contact with the Touareg, from whom they were separated before the fall of Timbuktu, and again as soon as they left the town, by the entire Songhaï country stretching along the banks of the Niger River. On the contrary, if they had formerly occupied Djerma, before the Djermabé or the Songhaï, one can easily understand this contact with the Touareg as well as the existence of the sword with the short crutch-handle /poignée en croix (Binger wrongly calls this straight sword a saber). In addition, when Binger speaks of the Targui /Tuareg/ dress, adopted in part by the Mossi, he doubtless thinks of the lithâm (or face veil) which was then worn by the Mossi horsemen. At the present time, they are no longer worn, and I have never seen them among the Mossi, where I lived 1908-1909.

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do, the crutch-handled /poignée en croix/ saber."

Actually, we must admit that we know nothing certain about the Mossi outside of Dagomba. This is what I /12/ clearly stated in my Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/ (1917) (1). The move into

1. See pp. 57 and 58.

Djerma is conjectural, and the question concerning the Mossah would have to be settled by an inquiry made in the Cameroons. At one time I was tempted to connect the Mossi with the races of the south, the Agni-Achanti /Ashanti/, and it seems certain that close relationships exist (2) between the numerical vocabularies of the Voltaic

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2. See Appendix No. I. In addition, a woman called Aoura-Poko plays as important a part in the Baoulé historic tradition as in the Mossi historic tradition. And, although the word for woman is oba, eba, bla in Achanti, Abron, and Baoulé, the Baoulé heroine is called Poko, like Poko (woman) or Pokotoéga (woman of the baobab) of the Mossi tradition.

group and the Agni-Achanti group. But can one base a linguistic comparison on vocabulary alone? It would also have to be proven, grammatically speaking, that the Voltaic linguistic group is very close to the Agni-Achanti group. (3) And this has not yet been done.

3. Delafosse says that there is no special relation between these two groups from a grammatical viewpoint. In a more general manner, Delafosse would now like to believe, as far as Mossi origins are concerned, that Mossi residence in their present country goes back far before the eleventh century A. D. Apparently only a band of pillagers and happy warriors, a princely dynasty came

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from Gambakha in the eleventh century to found small kingdoms in a country which had already been colonized by the Mossi. However, there is a drawback to this opinion: the existence among the Mossi of an autochthonous people (Nioniossé or Foulsé /Fulse/) still extant, who are far from having, always and everywhere, merged with the Mossi. According to my observations made in the area (I spent three years in Yatenga, from 1913 to 1916), there are still more Nioniossé than Mossi in Yatenga, 100,000 as against 70,000 (see my Noir du Yatenga, pages 665 and 666). The existence of this earlier people proves that the Mossi colonization is a relatively recent one. Also, the Mossi could not have penetrated and survived in an already inhabited region in any way other than by forming small, conquering military monarchies. I think therefore, that the Mossi came, with their chiefs, from Dagomba, and that they didn't reach the present Mossi country until ...

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But we are coming back to the chronological question which we will deal with later on.

174 For the moment, then, we are still reduced to dealing with hypotheses insofar as the origins of the Mossi are concerned. We know that the Mossi come from Dagomba and that they probably entered the country as conquerors. But where did they come from then? From the north-east? From the south? From the east? We cannot yet answer with certainty, just as we cannot for so many other historical, philosophical, and scientific questions, alas!

Grammatici certant et adhuc sub judice lis est.

Kaogo	1803-1806	"	1803-1806
Tougouri	1806-1822	"	1806-1822
Kom	1822-1825	"	1822-1825
Ragongo	1825-1831	"	1825-1831
Ridimba	1831	"	1831
Diogoré	1831-1834	"	1831-1834
Totébalobo	1834-1850	"	1834-1850
Yemdé	1850-1877	"	1850-1877
Sanoum	1877-1879	"	1877-1879
Noboga	1879-1884	"	1879-1884
Pigo II	1884-1885	"	1884-1885
Baogo	1885-1895	"	1885-1894
Bagaré	1895-1899	"	1894-1899
Liguidi	1899-1902	"	1899-1902
Koboga	since 1902	"	1902-1914

First of all, we can note that there is, I think, a slight confusion in the beginning /18/ of Delafosse's chronology. As a matter of fact, he counts (Vol. I, page 306) 40 years per generation, and, on the other hand (Vol. II, page 126), he places Oubri approximately from 1050 to 1090. But Oubri was the son of Zoungourana, himself the son of Ouidiraogo, himself the son of the princess Yennenga, himself the son of Nédéga, the king who ruled in Dagomba. There are, then, four generations from Nédéga to Oubri, which must make 160 years, according to Delafosse's calculations, and, if Oubri is to be placed between 1050 and 1090, that would put his great-great-grandfather Nédéga at about 890, that is, at the end of the ninth century A. D., or at least in 910, that is, at the beginning of the tenth century (1).

1. I have already noted this in my Noir du Yatenga, p. 673 (Appendix No. IV).

In this last case, the approximate dates would be the following:

Nédéga	about 910
Yennenga	about 950
Ouidiraogo	about 990
Zoungourana	about 1030
Oubri	between 1050 and 1090

174 Ouidiraogo, but one might hesitate between Rawa and Ouemtanango. If one chose the former, he would then have lived from 1200 to 1250 (which would indicate that my date of 1293 for this naba is too recent, and that Delafosse's date, the beginning of the eleventh century, is too early). If one chose Ouemtanango, the same would still apply: my date of 1333 for this naba would be a century too recent, and Delafosse's date would be some fifty years too early (1). In conclusion,

1. Delafosse places Ouemtanango at about 1170. One can deduce this from two passages of his Vol. II, pp. 126 and 139. In the last passage, he speaks of Ouemtanango himself and, in the first, of his father and uncles.

it is impossible for us to say exactly which naba was the first to wage war against the north, but, whether it was Rawa or Ouemtanango, it seems clear that since the beginning of the thirteenth century the Mossi were settled in their present territories, including Yatenga, and, therefore, we must conclude that they came there during the twelfth century. My 1917 Mossi chronology would, therefore, need some revision, since it brings the origins of Mossi history too close to our time. On the other hand, Delafosse's chronology also would seem to need some correction, since it exaggerates in the opposite direction. It would not be the first time that the truth should be found, as often happens, between two extreme opinions. /26/

Chapter 3

Mossi and Bambara

174 114 We know that the Bambara king, N'Golo, and the Mossi king, Kango, waged war against each other toward the end of the eighteenth century. Yatenga traditions preserve in detail the memory, embellished with somewhat burlesque variations, of the events that precipitated this war (see my Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/, 1917, pp. 88-91), but they say nothing of the war itself. Delafosse, in his

174 Haut-Sénégal-Niger /Upper Senegal and Niger/ (1912), starts out by
114 relating, according to Bambara traditions, the same stories of the causes that brought about the war (1), but he does not say much about

1. Vol. II, pp. 143, 144.

the war itself. After speaking of Kango's cruel extermination of the Bambara auxiliaries whom he had formerly needed and who had been lent to him, Delafosse adds (2): "It took place about 1760: Ngolo

2. Page 144.

Diara, then emperor of Ségou, wanted to avenge his compatriots and waged war against Yatenga, but he was driven back by Kango. Later, following a kind of civil war that broke out in Ségou, the Dioula merchants of the town fled and took refuge in Yatenga. Ngolo asked Kango to send them back to him and, upon his refusal, led for the third time an expedition against the Ouahigouya empire. This expedition had no more success than the preceding one, and Ngolo died during it, followed in death shortly thereafter by his opponent (1787)."

Further on, Delafosse says (3): "Ngolo led two expeditions against /127/

3. Same work, Vol. II, pp. 289, 290 (chapter on the history of the Bambara of Ségou).

the Mossi of Yatenga, whose emperor, Kango, had cruelly put to death some Banmana /Bambara/ warriors, who had been previously put at his disposal by Denkoro or by Ton-Mansa. Driven back after his first expedition (about 1760), Ngolo later returned to Yatenga in order to get back from Kango some Dioula merchants who had fled Ségou following a kind of civil war and whom the Yatenga emperor refused to send home. It would seem that this second expedition was no more successful than the first; in any case, in the course of this campaign, Ngolo contracted a disease from which he died before he could return to his capital (1787)."

All this is very scanty, and we would know little more about it (1) were it not for a very curious passage by Mungo-Park, which no

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1. Monteil, in his recent book, Bambara de Ségou et du Kaarta /Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta/ (1924), says nothing about these wars. He only alludes to them in a short note on page 76.

one has yet pointed out to my knowledge and which tells us of a very important event in this war: the capture of the town of Dienné by Kango, a feat of arms worthy of the ancient Mossi conquerors, Rawa, Ouemtanango, Nassodoba, etc., which assured a conclusive victory of the Mossi naba over the Bambara fama.

174 I have copied the following passage word for word from Mungo-Park (translation by the Abbé of Voisin, 1800, Vol. II, pp. 45 and 46):

"In the south of Jimbala is the Negro kingdom of Gotto (2) that

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2. Djimbala (which in Mandé means country of the great water, from gui, "water," ba, "great," and la, a suffix indicating the country or region) is the region north of Lake Débo. As for "Gotto," a name that Mungo-Park gives here to all the countries of the southeast and south (Mossi, Kong, Bondoukou, etc.), it is undoubtedly the word "Gottogo," the Sudanese and Mandé name for Bondoukou, which is given in error to everything southeast and south of Djimbala or Guimbala.

is said to be very large. In the past, it was divided into a large number of small states, governed by different chiefs whose continual wars incited neighboring countries to invade the land. One of these chiefs, called Moossie, was politic and shrewd enough to get all the others to declare war on the king of Bambarra /sic/, and to have himself unanimously named generalissimo. /28/ From the shores of Lake Debbie (1), on the upper Niger, Moossie sent a large number of

1. This refers to Lake Débo.

boats filled with provisions toward Yenné; and with his entire army

174 he entered into Bambarra. The inhabitants of Yenné saw him on the opposite shore of the Niger (2) before they had been told of his march.

2. Djenné is not right on the Niger nor on the Bani, but at a certain distance between the two rivers.

His flotilla joined him that same day, and, after having unloaded his provisions, he crossed the river with one part of his army and took Yenné by assault during the night. This exploit so frightened the Bambarra king that he asked for peace. He agreed to pay the victor an annual tribute of a certain number of slaves and to give back to the Gotto inhabitants all that had been taken away from them. (3)

[721 648]

3. This passage would indicate that the Dyoula of Gottogo (or Bondoukou), having some grievances against the Bambara of the Ségou region (assaulted peddlers, unpaid debts, etc.), went to the king of the Mossi to obtain justice, and that this might have been one of the causes of the war. There doubtless existed reciprocal grievances between Bambara and Mossi or between their natural allies.

Moussee /sic/ returned to Gotto in triumph, and he was proclaimed king. He gave his name to the capital."

As one can see, the important and valuable fact that must be extracted from this thick forest is the capture of Dienné by the king of the northern Mossi, the king of Yatenga (who at that time was Kango), during his struggles with the Bambara, that is, with Ngolo who was his contemporary. Because of his informants, who obviously did not 174 inform him with absolute precision and thus made him commit many ●114 small errors or miscalculations, Mungo-Park embellished the true fact with imaginary details. First of all, there is the name of Kango, Moossie, Moussie /sic/, which is the name of the conqueror's country and not his own name. Then, the name of Gotto is given to the Mossi country, undoubtedly because of a confusion, either in the minds of the Blacks who informed Mungo-Park or in the mind of the great

174 traveler himself, between the people of Gotto who were mixed in this
●114 affair and the Mossi of Yatenga who made the expedition. Finally, Naba Kango, although he brought great glory /29/ in the eighteenth century to the Mossi dynasty of Yatenga, obviously did not find, at the beginning of his reign, an absolute fragmentation of small countries which he would have gathered under single authority. He doubtless limited himself to restoring a kingdom that had formerly been powerful and centralized, and which he made so again through his personal prestige. In any case, he did not give his name to the Mossi (it is, on the contrary, the Mossi who, in Mungo-Park's description, give him his name), any more than to the capital which he indeed founded and which he called Ouahigouya. All these details are thus false or imaginary, but the principal fact remains and is very interesting. Mungo-Park arrived in Ségou just in time, in 1796, to
[153] record it before the weak memories of the Mossi and Bambara Negroes would have condemned it to hopeless oblivion. /30/

Chapter 4

The Cult of the Sun Among the Mossi

794 Do the Mossi adore the sun? And is their great god Ouendé partly or wholly a sun god?

Binger was the first to state that the Mossi adored the sun. "They are fetishists," he says (1), "but they have a cult of the sun, which

1. Du Niger au golfe de Guinée
/From the Niger to the Gulf of Guinea/,
Vol. I, p. 492.

still today bears the same name as God; they call it Wouidi."

In turn, Lieutenant Desplagnes, in his Plateau Central Nigérien /Central Nigerian Plateau/ (pp. 275, 276) said in 1907:

"The Hougho-Ouango of Mossi (these priests live in Mossi in the villages of Boujema, Mani, Kondogho, Yolo, Tio) make sacrifices to the sun in order to bind it to the earth, morning and evening, at

794 Later, in 1917, in my book Noir du Yatenga /Blacks of Yatenga/, since the few attempts that I had made in Yatenga to find this cult of the sun had given no results, I wrote (page 277):

"The sun is called ouindigho or ouindigha in Mossi (tili in Bambara). The word has a certain relationship with Ouendé, and the word Ouendé seems to be part of the construction of the word ouindigho. In any case, the Mossi and the Foulsé of Yatenga make no sacrifices to the sun. I interrogated in vain several important people about the details given by Lieutenant Desplagnes, pages 275 and 276 of his work, Plateau Central Nigérien about a cult of the sun in Mossi. It is true that these details concern the religious society of the Ouango and the villages where the members of this society would be operating: this would apply to villages of the Residency of Kaya (such as, Mané, Boujéma, etc.). One could thus pursue the studies in Kaya. /32/ In any case, the cult of the sun is totally unknown in Yatenga."

In my conclusion, I denied that there was a cult of the sun among the Mossi of Yatenga, while I admitted that one might be able to find this cult in other parts of Mossi country, particularly in the Residency (today, the circle) of Kaya.

794 The question was at that point when Father Eugène Mangin pub-
● 114 lished a study on the Mossi in Anthropos ("Les Mossi. Essai sur les us et coutumes du Soudan Occidental" /The Mossi, an Essay on the Usages and Customs of Western Sudan/, Vienna, 1916), a study in which the author, who lived for a long time in Ouagadougou among the central Mossi, brought most of his effort to bear on a study of the religious life of his charges. It may well be that Father Mangin's observations touch upon the question of sun worship in that country in a definitive manner, better than Binger and Desplagnes had done.

794 The Mossi, says Father Mangin, in their sacrifices to Ouendé, offer water for his rising and pour it to the east, and offer water for his setting and pour it to the west. In an argument, the weakest will also say: "God (Ouendé) is my witness that I have done you no harm, God
[796] will give it back to you," and he will point to the sun. Thus, Ouendé, the principal god of the Mossi, is indeed a sun god, and indeed the Mossi worship, in him, the sun.

Does this mean that Ouendé cannot also be a god of the sky or of the atmosphere, as I maintained in my Noir du Yatenga? Certainly not, and indeed Father Mangin mentions that Ouendé commands

4: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1957
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The village chiefs held their fiefs directly from the district chiefs, and were enfeoffed through the principle of primogeniture on the advice of district chiefs' ministers. They paid homage, and owed fealty, to their district chiefs, although part of their tribute always was sent to the Moro-naba. In the event of war they followed their district chief when he went to serve the Moro-naba. The village chiefs received presents from the heads of the families in the village and settled any local court cases in their villages. They did not have the right, however, either to put men into stocks or to have them executed. They were aided in the administration of the villages by the heads of families.

Almost every Mossi village had sections in which the nobles lived. As stated above, these people were the relatives or descendants of the district heads, and they lived in a semiparasitic condition upon the commoners in the village. Most of them owned horses and, in addition to furnishing the cavalry for the district chief's contingent during war, they raided and attacked caravans passing through the country. The nobles were subject to the control of the village chiefs, and it was not unusual for them to be under the jurisdiction of chiefs who were members of the commoner class. In such cases the district chiefs had a great deal of difficulty resolving the problems between their vassals and their kinsmen. The nobles could steal the wives and daughters of the commoners, but if a commoner tried to steal the wife of a noble he and the woman were both killed. Whenever a noble threatened to disrupt the life of a district he was secretly strangled by the district chief's men.

The above is a brief account of the origin and structure of the Mossi political system. Most of the myths regarding the origin of this system seem to suggest that here is a classic conquest state, but one neither founded by Caucasians nor extraordinarily influenced by them. The Mossi state is homogeneous in race, language, and culture, a feature not found in most of the other Sudanic states. This fact is not interesting in itself until we note that the Mossi share many cultural traits with the Voltaic peoples. Marc believes that this cultural homogeneity is the result of the Mossi invasion of the area during which they imposed their languages and customs on the indigenous populations. Apparently not believing the traditions about the Dagomba origin of the Mossi, he explains the fact that such non-Mossi groups as the Nankana, Wala, and Dagari speak Mossi dialects as proof that the Mossi were politically more powerful in ancient times, but "the feudal regime disappeared little by little.... The Mossi language was kept; [it is] the only actual witness of the ancient power of the Mossi" (author's translation).[5] We know, however, that the Mossi were still encroaching on the territories of their neighbors when the French arrived in 1896.[6]

Rattray believes that the inhabitants of Mamprussi, Dagomba, and Mossi territories are the same now as they were "centuries before the ancestors of those who are now their rulers appeared on the scene."[7] He states that

4: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1957
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631 642 174 114 these conquerors even adopted the language and culture of the indigenous populations, but introduced an "administrative machinery" that welded scattered local groups into loose confederacies without affecting in any great degree the inner life of these groups.[8] Rattray's hypothesis appears to explain quite adequately the reasons for the cultural homogeneity of the Mossi and the other Voltaic peoples. It also conforms to what we know from recent historical times of the organizing and conquering abilities of such figures as Samory and El Hadj Omar. These men carved out veritable empires in this area in remarkably short periods. However, we need not accept Rattray's hypothesis that foreigners were the ones who instituted "administrative machinery" among the Mossi. It is highly possible that the Mossi state might have been the result of internal Voltaic development when one Dagomba lineage established its hegemony over scattered local people in this area. There is some evidence here that the Mossi state had many of the features of the widespread Negro pattern of political structure so common to the other Sudanic states, and this fits in very well with what Professor Greenberg reports about the basic African nature of these states.[9]

631 642 121 171 It is clear that the Mossi state was a complex entity and many persons cannot describe it without calling it feudal.[10] However, the question of feudalism itself is a vexing one, and many scholars limit the use of this term to describe the political system of medieval France and possibly Japan. In fact, not many people would admit the presence of feudal states in Africa although some, such as S. F. Nadel, who worked among the Nupe, call the Sudanic states feudal and talk about fiefs and vassalage. It is now generally agreed that feudalism, despite its other aspects, is basically a form of government. Stephenson gives the classic features of a feudal state as: (1) fief-holding with vassalage; (2) homage and fealty; (3) mutual obligations between lords and vassals; (4) military service from the vassals; (5) inheritance of fiefs by heirs of vassals, usually by primogeniture; (6) subinfeudation; (7) attendance at court; and (8) wardship and marriage arrangements by which fiefs could be held in trust for minors and, in the case of female heirs, husbands who can render homage for them.[11]

An examination of the Mossi political system in terms of the first six characteristics of feudalism shows that this system conforms very well to the specifications for a feudal system. The Mossi did not have an elaborate court structure on the European model and, since only mature males could inherit fiefs, no arrangements for wardships and marriages were necessary. Furthermore, I do not think that these two traits are necessary for feudalism, and they can be considered as cultural content that need not be present in all social processes with similar functions.

Mossi-like societies present a special problem to political theorists because of the importance of kinship in their political systems. Coulborn[12] strongly insists that "A feudal society... is based on contract. It is not

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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797 labor was abolished and the Mossi could do as they wished, mission school and church attendance declined, and the Mossi mothers even refused to attend the Catholic maternity clinics. During this entire period, the Moslems were propagating the ideas that recruitment for forced labor and other injustices would cease only when all the Mossi embraced Islam.

(3) Catholicism attempted to break down the Mossi social system during the period when their political system was rendered practially impotent. But while the Mossi could not forcibly oppose the effects of French policy on their political system, they effectively neutralized the church's attempts to disrupt their social system. In contrast to Catholicism, Islamic practices and tenets harmonized with many aspects of the Mossi social system, especially with regard to polygny and the status of women. Many Mossi converted to Islam in order to fulfill the prescriptions of pagan shamans, who linked conversion with the acquisition of children to continue the lineage. Christianity did not admit the existence of the tradtional supernatural forces, and evolved no techniques for dealing with the Mossi's belief in the efficacy of such forces. In the sphere of social mobility, Islam permitted the most illiterate emancipated serf to make a pilgrimage and return an honored El Hadj, while only the most brilliant scholar is able to become an official in the Catholic community.

(4) More of the young men who leave their homes to serve in the armed forces or spend long periods away as laborers return as Moslems than as Christians. There is, however, no evidence that the increased Islamization of the Mossi is due to the heavy seasonal migration of young men to Ghana and Ivory Coast.

(5) American Protestantism, although not associated with French administrative policy, was negatively received because its missionaries were Europeans (whites). Furthermore, the extremely intolerant Protestant attitude toward the traditional Mossi religion and the puritanical nature of their religion made their efforts at conversion highly unsuccessful.

(6) The increase of public schools is lessening the importance of Catholicism and the Catholic school as the only means of social mobility through education. The newly emancipated pagan and Moslem masses are forcing the Catholic-trained Mossi politicians to act in the interest of their constituents, even if at the expense of the missions and Catholicism. The Catholics have consecrated the first Mossi bishop and have installed him in his see, but the return of each plane-load of Mossi Hadjis from Mecca spreads Islam into the remotest villages.

NOTES

114 [122] [1] This article is an expanded version of a paper read at a meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Chicago, 1957. The field work on which this analysis is based was conducted among the Mossi of Ouagadougou from November 1955 to January 1957, and was made possible by a Fellowship from The Ford Foundation African Studies Program. Needless to say, all ideas contained herein are my own. During these months among the Mossi I lived both in the predominantly Moslem district of Nobéré, and in the district of Manga, which has a fairly

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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large Catholic population. I am indebted to Conrad Arensberg, Joseph Greenberg, Marvin Harris, and Ben Zimmermann for many helpful suggestions. 114

[2] Tauxier (1912:792) reports that when he visited Pirigui village, situated to the north of Ouagadougou, he was surprised to discover that almost half of the nobles were Moslems. It is highly probably that here, also, were the descendants of a son of Sagha who replaced a dissident chief.

[3] These figures are only approximate since many thousands of persons are unreported. Again, many persons listed as Moslems are pagans who have taken Moslem names for ritual purposes.

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9:Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1960 FA28 Mossi FA28

with the Moro Naba and his chiefs. The Mossi commoner who became Minister of the Interior in the Mendes-France government received the treatment fitting to his rank from French officials in Africa, but he bowed humbly and paid homage to the Moro Naba when he visited Wagadougou. In return he still receives political support from the traditional Mossi hierarchy. Whether or not this man and the other Mossi politicians of commoner origin will continue to honor and respect the chiefs in order to obtain their support is not known. It is possible that this situation will change if the growing number of urban Mossi and some of their rural fellows attack the position of the chiefs. But for the foreseeable future it appears as though the traditional dynasty will remain in power, and may even extend its power at the expense of the other non-Mossi groups who are now members of the Voltaic Republic.

The apparent success of the ancient political dynasty of the Mossi people to adapt itself to the requirements of the modern world shows the ability of African institutions to adjust novelty with tradition. It confirms what the anthropologists have always known, that Africa was not a *tabla rasa* on which conquerors could easily impose their ideas and institutions. The cultures of Africa were meaningful to its peoples and when they could not be maintained, they were reinterpreted to meet new situations.[9] It is quite true that because of historical reasons the Mossi did not come into as intensive contact with Europeans as did their neighbors to the south, and that this is possibly why their institutions have persisted. However, the experience of Ghana should make us pause before accepting such a facile answer. A British type of Parliamentary system was imposed upon that country, but it is changing so rapidly that one wonders whether it should have been imposed in the first place. It is still too early to tell what the Ghanaian and other modern African governments will look like; but one might speculate that within the bounds set by the exigencies of the modern world, these governments may resemble the traditional African ones much more than those of their ephemeral conquerors.

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1. According to C. K. Meek, among the Jukun "The King's demise was and is kept a close secret, and is not, in fact revealed until some months afterwards, when the body is formally buried. Various reasons are assigned for this secrecy, such as that

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the councillors may have time to choose a successor, that bloody contests between aspirants for the throne may be avoided, or that the royal slaves and wives may not run off." (*A Sudanese Kingdom*, C. K. Meek. London, 1931), p. 166. Among the Banyoro of Uganda, "When the King died, it was not made known for some days and only those in attendance knew that death had taken place, that, as they said, "Kataza," he "slept." (p. 21). And although there was some understanding as to who should be chief there was fighting between the different princes. "The fighting among princes might last only a few days while sometimes it would go on for weeks and even months." (p. 124) (*The Bakitara of Bunyoro*. John Roscoe. Cambridge University Press, 1923). Among the BaVenda, "None of the people are informed of the death of the chief, but when some months have passed and the people begin to grow restless they are told that he has gone away; often a year or more used to elapse between the death of the chief and any recognition of it . . . It appears that during the interregnum any excitement or attempts at usurpation of power have time to work themselves out before the heir is installed; Everybody has a shrewd idea as to the true state of affairs, although no one dares to speak of it." *The BaVenda*, Hugh A. Stayt, London, 1931), p. 207.

2. "The Kingdom of Ankole in Uganda," by K. Oberg, pp. 137-158, in *African Political Systems*, edited by M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Oxford Press, 1940.
3. "An Analysis of the Political Organization of the Mossi People" by Elliott P. Skinner, in *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Ser. II, Vol. 19, No. 8, 00 740-720, June, 1957.
4. Copy of Telegram in the Archives of I.F.A.N. at Wagadougou, Voltaic Republic.
5. *French West Africa*. Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, Stanford University Press. 1958, pp. 223-234.
6. "Christianity and Islam Among the Mossi," Eliott P. Skinner in *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 60, No. 6, December, 1958, pp. 1102-1119.
7. Thompson and Adloff, *op. cit.* p. 177.
8. *L'Afrique Francaise*. Vol. 66, 1957, p. 21, Paris.
9. *Man and His Works*, Melville J. Herskovits, New York, 1950, p. 542 *ff*, and Joseph H. Greenberg, "The Influence of Islam on a Sudanese Religion," *Monographs of the American Ethnological Society*, Vol. X, 1946.

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position of the set in Mossi society. In the years immediately following initiation the members are much involved in group activities, e.g., the arrangement of social dances, courtship, and co-operation in work groups composed of male and female age-sets, and during this period joking is important. As the members attain adult status the groups tend to lose their structural integrity; their minor corporate functions dwindle and ultimately disappear as the responsibility of the young people to their kin groups increases. With this shift in emphasis, joking behavior also diminishes.

While it lasts, however, this type of joking likewise has a structural context characterized by the attributes already identified. Age-sets are structurally separate within the age-grade. Their relations are reciprocal: individual members co-operate in the arrangement of one another's sexual liaisons; they pool their labor and share the profits they earn as members of their co-operative work organizations; and young men often leave Yatenga as migrant laborers in groups organized on the basis of age-grade membership, thereby reinforcing many of the reciprocal ties established in the work groups. The ambivalence characteristic of the relationship is perhaps best explained as the rivalry of peers. Since there is no status hierarchy within a Mossi age-grade, the age-sets are structurally equivalent and independent.

Intervillage Joking

When intervillage joking is institutionalized it may involve all the members of each community. However, I believe it is particularly expected of their respective chiefs. In either case, the participants are separated by their differing political affiliations. The inhabitants of each village are expected to reciprocate in one another's defense, to be mutually hospitable, and to co-operate in the regulation of land tenure at their frontiers. Ambivalence derives from a history of past hostility, dating perhaps from an earlier period when competition for new land was keener and the expanding kingdom did not yet encompass all the villages now within its borders. Such villages are always structurally equivalent in status within the political system, and each is independent of the other.

Joking Between Ethnic Groups

The joking relationship which the Mossi maintain with the Gurunsi and the Samogho peoples, among others, appears to involve the same structural characteristics. However, I learned of this relationship only shortly before I left Yatenga, and a more certain statement concerning it must therefore await further research. It is certain that such joking occurs; I am unsure only of the number of other ethnic groups involved[3] and of the relevant details of their historical relations to the Mossi of Yatenga. The groups involved are again separate. There is an expectation that members of each group should extend hospitality and assistance to members of the other. As with villages whose inhabitants joke, the participants in this relationship are ambivalent in their attitudes; the present expectation of co-operation is coupled with a past

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ship itself and the contract of interlineage co-operation and solidarity which every marriage serves to establish or reinforce.[4]

Although this joking interchange is seen in its full implications when there is an immediate source of dissension between marriage partners, it may also occur in the absence of any specific difficulty. Then it is apparently indulged in simply because it is expected, and for the pleasure which the Mossi, like all people, derive from an occasion to exercise their wit. It is this relatively disinterested joking which has been most frequently described in the literature, and this may account for the failure of many scholars to perceive more fully the important social and psychological functions which joking may fulfill.

Conclusion

This paper has been written as a tentative step toward a reformulation of the various and disparate observations on joking contained in the anthropological literature. I have contended that an analysis of this literature indicates that wherever joking is institutionalized the structural relationship between the participants tends to be characterized by five significantly interrelated structural attributes: separation, reciprocity, ambivalence, equality, and independence. I have also indicated that such joking may serve as an adjustive mechanism by providing for the concurrent maintenance of communication, control, and the culturally harmless catharsis of potentially disruptive emotions.

A variety of forms of institutionalized joking found among the Mossi of Yatenga have been cited to illustrate these points. However, I suggest that the factors which cluster with this reliance on joking as an adjustive mechanism are not unique to the Mossi. Institutionalized joking reported for other parts of Africa appears to be structurally and processually similar.

NOTES

1. A shorter version of this paper was read at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association held in San Francisco in November, 1963. It is based on field research conducted among the Mossi from 1954 to 1956 with the assistance of a Ford Foundation Fellowship.

2. Marriage between the members of descent groups united by a joking alliance is regarded by the Mossi as highly desirable, apparently in recognition of the useful role of joking as an adjustive mechanism. Once such a marriage is contracted, however, Ego and his wife must take care that their joking insults are directed only at the younger kinsmen of the other and that the insulting remarks are personal. It would, for example, be acceptable for Ego to call his wife's younger sister a disreputable shrew but dangerous to call her a slave (a term of disrespect used frequently in joking between sibs). To refer to her as a slave would cast unflattering aspersions on her entire kin group, including her mother and father, with whom, in their new status as parents-in-law, Ego may no longer joke.

3. I believe that joking is also institutionalized between the Mossi and the Yarse, a highly acculturated ethnic minority of Mande origin who live throughout Yatenga. There is also joking between the Mossi and the indigenous blacksmith caste. Unfortunately my data on these two instances of joking are inadequate.

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[p. vii]
[pp. iv–vi are blank]

PREFACE

THIS BOOK ATTEMPTS to contribute to our understanding of Mossi society, about which relatively little is known even within the continent of Africa. Many of the data were collected in the Upper Volta Republic between November 1955 and January 1957, a period when the Voltaics were preparing for important political changes. I did most of my field work in the area formerly included within the kingdom of Ouagadougou. I stayed only one week in the Yatenga and paid but brief visits to Tenkodogo and the Boussouma region. Thus, my basic data hold chiefly for Ouagadougou. My methods of research were the conventional anthropological ones: I recorded local oral histories, conducted personal interviews, attended court and important rituals, participated in the life of the people whenever possible, and collected genealogical and biographical data.

In addition, I read all the important documents I could find on the political history of the Mossi people in the files of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire, in local administrative offices, and in the Archives of the Governor General of French West Africa in Dakar, Senegal. I also read published works on the Mossi by such scholars as Maurice Delafosse, A. A. Dim Delobson, Georges Cheron, Eugene Mangin, Lucien Marc, and Louis Tauxier. Their works were invaluable to me, and I owe them a debt of gratitude. My hope is that what I have added to the store of knowledge about the Mossi may be of service to Mossi scholars, whose studies will ultimately bring to light aspects of their own culture that we have missed.

The ethnographer working in contemporary Africa is faced with the problem of the time dimension. In reporting his findings, he may use the "ethnographic present" and describe the cultural system he studied as though all elements, even those dredged up from the memories of old men, were still viable in the society. Or he may use the past tense and thus underscore the fact that the society is changing, even though cultural traits from the past may be present and viable. I have elected the latter course primarily

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because, even though many of the aspects of Mossi culture described here are still in existence, Mossi society is changing ever more rapidly. Many old culture traits that I found there as late as 1955 had all but disappeared when I returned in 1960. Not to recognize this fact in preparing this study would have laid the ground for the criticism that anthropologists ignore the changes taking place around them in order to concentrate upon the past.

My own interest in the Mossi grew out of an early curiosity about the cultures and societies of Africa. It was born of my parents' concern over Ethiopia's struggle to remain free and nurtured by the writings of Mr. Marcus A. Garvey, Dr. W. E. B. Dubois, and Professors Melville J. Herskovits and E. Franklin Frazier. These factors, together with the help and encouragement of my relatives and friends, ultimately led me to choose a career in anthropology and African studies. I am grateful to Professor John L. Landgraf of New York University, who first taught me the elements of anthropology and thus provided me with the basic tools for understanding human societies. To Dr. Gene Weltfish and Professor Joseph H. Greenberg of Columbia University I owe a further debt of gratitude for having directed my first studies of African cultures. To them, and to Professors Conrad M. Arensberg, Morton H. Fried, and Charles Wagley, also of Columbia University, I owe whatever skill and competence in social-science research I may possess. I am grateful to the Ford Foundation for financing the field work on which this study is based, and to the Arts and Science Research Fund Committee of New York University for help in defraying the cost of preparing the manuscript for publication.

I am deeply indebted to the Mossi people for having permitted me to live among them for fourteen months. M. François Bouda, district chief of Manga, and Naba Boulga, district chief of Nobere, not only welcomed me but kindly consented to answer my innumerable questions about the nature of their political and other institutions. The Djiba Naba, who subsequently became Mogho Naba Kougri, also encouraged me in my task, and so did Dr. Joseph Conombo. Without the help of M. Beta Nyissa, my friend and interpreter, field work would have been difficult. He not only explained many aspects of Mossi culture to me, but put me in touch with persons who could answer my questions, and taught me the rudiments of the Mossi language.

I must also thank my good friend Mme. Ouennam Pousde for helping me to understand the point of view of the Mossi women. This kind lady never ceased to be amused at the attempts of this *yagenga* (brother's son) to participate as fully as possible in Mossi life. M. Frederic Guierma en-

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the Niger-Congo family of African languages.[6] Like the Mossi, these groups are primarily horticultural; cereals are their main crops, and they cultivate yams where conditions permit. Their social organization takes both patrilineal and matrilineal forms. The veneration of ancestors lies at the core of their religious beliefs, but the existence of an otiose high god whose name contains the root *We* (*Ouennam, Win, Wene,* etc.) is also recognized. There are also tutelary spirits, the chief one being a female earth deity associated with We and called *Tenga* (also occurring as *Teng, Tena,* and *Ten*). The *Tengsobadamba,* who are priests or custodians of the earth shrines, are found among all the groups in the Voltaic family, and they often share leadership with more secular chiefs called *Naba, Na,* or *Nab.* Most of the ruling clans of the Voltaic groups claim common ancestry and acknowledge the same totems.[8]

The only glaring dissimilarity between these Voltaic peoples, and the one with which this study is primarily concerned, lies in the realm of political organization. Some are united into large kingdoms, while others form small acephalous groups. Delafosse makes the following generalizations about the smaller groups:

> It may be said of these people that, as a whole, they have remained quite primitive. With a few exceptions, they have not reached any significant level of political development; as a rule, they have not progressed beyond family unity. Although they neighbor on well-organized and powerful states such as the Mossi empires and the kingdoms of the Gourma and Bergo, which are inhabited by populations of the same ethnic group, they have derived little benefit from this proximity; some of them have been absorbed as subjects or vassals by these states, while others have remained on the outside, and seem to have but one purpose, the forceful preservation of their fierce but sterile independence. . . . Attachment to the land seems to be the only solid and fecund institution in their chaotic society.[7]

Rattray believes that the development of such highly organized political systems as those of the Mossi, Dagomba, and Mamprusi may be traced to "small bands of strangers." He thinks that the outsiders were better armed, better clothed, and familiar with the rudiments of Islam, and that since they knew about the institution of kingship, they were able to "superimpose upon the primitive tribes among whom they settled a new and unheard-of political conception, namely the idea of territorial and secular leadership in place of the immemorial institution of a ruler who was the high priest of a totemic clan and dealt only in spiritual sanctions." Nevertheless, Rattray is not certain that the Voltaic groups would not have evolved complex political systems if they had been left to themselves. He makes the significant statement that if the subjugation by the bands of strangers had not

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taken place, the local earth-priest or priest-king "undoubtedly would have evolved into the type of native ruler . . . who was not only high priest and custodian of the land of his tribe and of the ancestral spirits but one who was a chief or king on a territorial basis, whose sanctions were secular and physical rather than spiritual; in other words, what the average European implies when he uses the word 'king' or 'chief.'"[8]

Since pristine state development has occurred so seldom, it is difficult to evaluate Rattray's speculations about the possible local development of complex political forms. Nevertheless, his view that bands of strangers were responsible for state formation in the area is supported by most of the local traditions.

The relationship between the Voltaic peoples and the bands of strangers has not received the attention it deserves. In fact, the implications of such a relationship have often been underrated. As a result, groups that may once have been part of larger political entities created by these strangers have been regarded as acephalous, that is, as having very weak chiefs or no chiefs at all. In his studies of the Tallensi of northern Ghana, for example, Fortes constantly refers to a group of lineages called *Namoos,* whose members claim to be descended from the Mamprusi ruling group. He states that a Tallensi chief from the Tongo area claimed to be "the ruler of all the Tallensi." In another context Fortes discusses the status of a chief called *Kuna'aba,* who, he tells us, is regarded by the other Tallensi chiefs as their "father," to whom they owe "loyalty, respect, and ceremonial deference." Moreover, Fortes indicates that ceremonial investiture by Kuna'aba is "the crucial act conferring chiefship" on a Tale, even if the latter is actually selected by an administrative officer.[9] These facts should have indicated to Fortes that he was dealing with a rather complex historical problem that required further investigation.

Instead of carrying the investigation further, however, he dismisses the Tongo chief's claim of control over all Taleland with the assertion that "it is a distortion in terms of the modern privileges of chiefship, of a status which is merely that of *primus inter pares* in the native system." Similarly, he doubts the historical status and role of Kuna'aba: "Kuna'aba's modern judicial and administrative authority rests solely on the sanction of force represented by the [British] Administration." Interestingly enough, Fortes tells us that "the Administration has always regarded Taleland as part of the 'Mamprusi State,' under the ultimate rule of the chief of Mampurugu, through his sub-chief and deputy, the Kuna'aba, who was considered to have full jurisdiction over the 'Kurugu Division.'"[10]

Rattray, whose study of the Tallensi predates Fortes', declares that the

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the name of the current ruler. When Crozat asked one of his Mossi bearers why Boukary Koutou had chosen a title that means "elephant," the man declared, "He is an elephant; he is king of all kings as the elephant is king of all animals; a great elephant-king he is."[2] Another Moaga, meeting Crozat on the road to Ouagadougou, told him to be prepared to meet a monarch "whose riches are inexhaustible and whose splendor is marvelous. He and his family wear only the most admirable European clothes; a thousand horses stand before his door, and there are more than a thousand women in his house. He is served by one hundred eunuchs; he commands as master 333 chiefs; and when he speaks to them it is as though God himself had spoken; everyone bows down before him and obeys."[3] Crozat, looking at the Mogho Naba through European eyes, did not find the "great king" he had expected. Yet he and later European visitors to the Mossi capital did affirm that all Mossi officials and district chiefs prostrated themselves in obeisance to their sovereign, even if they did not subsequently follow his instructions.[4]

Many rituals associated with the person and court of the Mogho Naba served to emphasize the high esteem in which he was held by his subjects. For example, the sovereign showed himself every morning at a ceremony called "Ouend pous yan" (literally, "God rises," or "the sun rises") that survives to this day. The name of this ceremony has led many scholars and travelers to assert that traditionally the Mogho Naba was considered a divine king. Dim Delobson states that this ceremony "shows the regard which the Mossi have for their chief, since they compare him to the sun, and thus to a 'god.'"[5] However, the Mossi do not now and probably never did regard their monarchs either as gods or as divine kings. There is a great deal of difference between regarding a man as "powerful and brilliant" like the sun and regarding him as divine. As a matter of fact, the Mossi very often dramatize in humorous fashion the all-too-human frailties of their rulers, without ever considering it sacrilegious to do so. On the other hand, the Mogho Naba, as the supreme ruler, was expected to follow faithfully the strict etiquette demanded by his exalted position.

The morning ceremony was opened by the ruler's chief page, the *soghone-kasanga*, who sprinkled a phylacteric solution around a throne (*guere*) in the courtyard in front of a reception room called the *zongo*. Other pages (*soghondamba*) brought out a large cushion (*naghpure*), the ruler's sword, and other personal accouterments, and placed them on the throne. Still other pages aided the Mogho Naba in his toilet. He was clothed in a large red robe, which symbolized the rising sun; he wore a bonnet surmounted by silver streamers (*wazourfou sebere*), which represented the sun itself.

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fathers died. In this way the rulers not only retained the allegiance of the boys' fathers but had a unique opportunity to determine whether these boys were qualified to succeed to the nam.

The life of a page was confining, even if sometimes very rewarding. Pages were bound by the demands of the ruler, whose every wish had to be satisfied immediately. A quarrelsome ruler was a terror to his pages, who had to bear silently his insults and blows. On the other hand, a considerate monarch permitted or encouraged his pages to profit from the small political intrigues in which they were invariably involved. Prospective district chiefs "made friends" with pages to find out whether their suits were progressing, or to whom they might usefully offer gifts. The pages used any money they might procure to buy clothes for themselves, to supplement the clothing and presents they received from their relatives. Every page was "adopted" by one of the royal wives, who prepared his meals and took care of him. In return, he helped this woman cultivate her field when his presence was not required by the monarch. When a page completed his service satisfactorily, he received a pughsiudga as a wife. If his work had not been satisfactory, he was simply dismissed.

The only woman who played any significant role at the court of the Mogho Naba was the Pughtiema, his head wife. She was the only wife to whom he presented his friends, and whom he allowed his subjects to visit. This woman, who was commonly the widow of the former Mogho Naba, was often chosen because she was past childbearing age: she was thus older and wiser than the other wives, less preoccupied with children, and above the sexual jealousies that may often develop in polygynous households. She arbitrated among the wives and stood *in loco parentis* to the younger ones, whom she instructed and advised. She served also as official hostess to the ancestors during the annual propitiatory rituals. It was her duty to prepare the millet beer and millet water for the sacrifices to the ancestors, who were believed to feast at her hut before they visited the rest of the household. In addition, it was she who prepared to accompany the Mogho Naba to La each day. Lastly, it was her duty to introduce any new royal wife to the ancestors, and to ask them to watch over this potential mother of their descendants.

The ruler inherited some of his wives from his father; some he received from his many friends and vassals; and others he selected from among his pughsiudse. Crozat reports that Mogho Naba Wobogo (1890-96) allegedly had a hundred wives. Crozat did not see this many women at Wobogo's court, understandably, since most of a ruler's wives lived in villages, where they were guarded by eunuchs.[22] Of the substantial number of royal wives

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went to Djiba when his grandfather died and his father was installed as Mogho Naba.

The origin of Djiba's status as the seat of the Crown Prince is rather obscure. The people of the neighboring district of Nobere say that Djiba was founded by a "companion" of their own founder, Naba Biligo, one of the numerous "eldest" sons of Mogho Naba Oubri, the implication being that Djiba was supervised by Nobere. However, no one seems to know when Djiba's status changed or what happened to the ancient family who used to govern it. The consensus is that in earlier times the heir presumptive to Ouagadougou did not necessarily become chief of Djiba, but was given any district whose chieftainship was vacant when he came of age. Dim Delobson reports that Djiba became the district of the Crown Prince sometime during the seventeenth century, when Mogho Naba Zombere, who had reigned for sixty years, found it necessary to establish a permanent seat for his heir.[20] However, Dim Delobson does not report under what conditions Djiba was chosen, nor does he say what happened to the local ruling lineage when this transfer took place. That the transfer was carried out in the manner reported by Dim Delobson is not doubted, because each new Mogho Naba obtained districts for his relatives in this way. Through this process, the people of the ancient ruling lineages were usually reduced to the level of commoners, and this is apparently what happened to the rulers of Djiba.

The first public sign that the young prince was being prepared for the nam came in the form of a summons commanding him to go to Ouagadougou to be installed as Djiba Naba. On his way to the capital, he visited several villages where the local Tengsobadamba made sacrifices to the earth goddess in his name. He took this opportunity to meet with the district chiefs and their assembled village chiefs; he was entertained by them; and in turn he distributed gifts to the old women, whose praises were considered especially effective in bringing health and long life. When the boy finally arrived at the capital, he lodged at the compound of the Kambo Naba, head of the palace guard, until the Mogho Naba and his ministers installed him as chief of Djiba.

The installation rites for the Crown Prince were very similar to those already described for the Mogho Naba, and identical to those for the district chiefs. During the ceremony, no mention was made of the fact that the prince was the son of the Mogho Naba. The only special feature was that when the prince went into the courtyard after the ceremony to render homage to the Mogho Naba, he sat in an area assigned to him by custom. When the ruler appeared, the prince followed the Gounga Naba, who was pro-

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cause he thought Sanum had attacked him unjustly. For such acts of war, the Dimdamba involved usually lost their lives, and in at least one such case a Dim was turned over to the Mogho Naba by another Dim. We have seen that Dimdamba occasionally came to the aid of the Mogho Naba against another Dim.

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A question of some importance is whether this relationship between the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou and the rulers of independent kingdoms and autonomous principalities was characteristic of Mossi society or a rather late development. Was warfare the natural concomitant of a system in which the normally powerful Ouagadougou ruler was sometimes too weak to command allegiance from his peers and subordinates? Did the Mogho Naba resort to warfare as the only possible means of exercising his authority when his commands were challenged or ignored? Delafosse states, "Sometimes . . . , especially in very recent times, discord arose between the emperor [of Ouagadougou] and some of his vassal kings: thus Naba Sanum had to fight against the desire for independence of the kings of Boussouma and Boulsa."[16] Delafosse seems to suggest that the Mossi people were undergoing a period of stress when the Europeans arrived, and were faced with significant new administrative problems.

Here Binger appears to support Delafosse's view:

> Ever since he acceded to the throne, [Mogho Naba Sanum] has been compelled to govern the Mossi with unmitigated despotism. His fear of losing power led him to take such severe measures that he was forced to relax them. As soon as his major vassals saw this, they took these concessions as signs of fear and began to conspire secretly against him. Today, the chiefs of Mani, Boussouma, Yako, and Koupela represent forces with which Naba Sanum will have to reckon. . . . Before long, the Mossi empire will break up; the country will organize into confederacies like those of Beledougou and Yatenga.[17]

It is not completely clear, however, whether Binger really understood the intricacies of the Mossi political organization. He lists as "vassals" of the Mogho Naba such territories as Mane, Kaya, Koupela, Bonsa, Boussouma, Djitenga, Boulsa, Dakay, and Doulougou, as though they were all related to Ouagadougou in the same way. In reality, some were autonomous and some were directly dependent on the Ouagadougou ruler. It is possible that at the time of Binger's visit, the relations between the Mogho Naba and his subordinates were so fluid that the outsider had difficulty in understanding them. If this is the case, then the situation in Mossi country had indeed changed when the Europeans came in.

Crozat, who says the Mossi governmental structure was feudal in na-

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642 66 ADMINISTRATION

631 ture, offers what is probably the best analysis of power relations among the
628 important Mossi chiefs. In commenting upon the Mogho Naba's inability
174 to stop the war between Yako and Yatenga he asks, "How could it be
● 114 otherwise? With what sanctions could this king without an army back up his orders if he ventured to give any? . . . In short, when the Ouagadougou ruler speaks, he is sometimes obeyed. If he is, all is well; if he is not, all is still well. Everything remains as before."[18] Crozat was mistaken if he believed that the Mogho Naba did not have a fighting force. What he did not have was a standing army to exercise his power whenever he wished. When he was able to summon an army, he was effective; when he was not, he had little power over any territory but his own. Crozat, like Binger, gives a strange picture of the political relationship between the Mogho Naba and the other rulers. He tells us that in the Mossi political hierarchy, "after the ruler of Ouagadougou comes the ruler of Boussouma, then the Yatenga ruler, and then the ruler of Yako."[19] Yatenga was traditionally independent of Ouagadougou, whereas Boussouma and Yako were simply autonomous principalities dependent on the Mogho Naba. It is possible that Crozat mistook the relative power of these various political entities for a hierarchical relationship. It is also possible that at the time of his visit, the Dimdamba felt sufficiently powerful to ignore the traditional hierarchy as far as their political relationship with other rulers was concerned, and were simply acknowledging relative gradations of power.

643 Clearly, the sovereignty of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou over the
642 independent kingdoms and autonomous principalities depended chiefly on
628 military might. The stronger a Mogho Naba was, the more actively he tried to control the internal administration of the autonomous principalities and to exercise police powers over them or on their behalf. However, most Mogho Nanamse were content to claim superiority or control over the independent kingdoms and refrained from meddling in their affairs.

643 Within the Mogho Naba's own kingdom, however, the situation was
635 different. Here, like other important Mossi rulers, he directed the admin-
634 istrative apparatus. For administrative purposes, the kingdom of Ouaga-
[642] dougou was divided into five large provinces (*weto*; sing. *weogho*; or
[161] *solem*, from *so*, "command"). Together they included some three hundred districts, in which there were over four thousand villages inhabited by some 862,000 persons.[20] (Not included here were districts and villages directly administered by the Mogho Naba.) The provinces were not compact physical entities, because their component units were scattered throughout the country. To be sure, some of the districts within a province were close together or even contiguous, but many others stood alongside districts be-

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Naba was responsible for checking these depredations, but he had little coercive force since these nobles were infinitely superior to him in rank.

The Mogho Naba held his five ministers responsible for the administration of the districts within their provinces. Therefore they had to function as liaison officers between him and the district chiefs. Every morning, in order of precedence, the ministers reported the news they had received from their provinces since the previous day. At this time, the Mogho Naba also gave them messages for their districts. Later in the day, the ministers presented to the ruler those persons who had come from their provinces to the capital with special grievances, requests, or gifts. Delicate affairs of state were left for the evening, when they were discussed by the Mogho Naba, his minister or ministers, and other important persons.

From all reports, these administrative affairs kept both the ministers and the Mogho Naba quite busy. Binger, who could barely conceal his displeasure with Mogho Naba Sanum, gives this critical but otherwise highly illuminating view of the Mossi ruler's administrative activities:

> The duties of Naba Sanum are not too important. They consist of receiving visits throughout the day. In the morning, at about six o'clock, the drums announce that the ruler has arisen. When he has washed and refreshed himself with a meal, his captives and his wives go to his chamber to salute him. Then comes the turn of strangers, people of the neighborhood, petitioners, and others. They squat before the reception area until the ruler deigns to appear. When a large number of people have gathered, one of the [pages] goes to notify the ruler, who then arrives, sits on his cushion, and casts an amiable glance on the gathering while all present snap their fingers. As soon as Naba Sanum is seated, the petitioners and visitors hurry toward the monarch, throw themselves face down on the earth, and cover their heads with sand. Then each of them gets up and presents a gift of greater or lesser importance, in cowries or foodstuffs, according to what he wishes to ask. Then the [pages] come and say to the ruler, "A certain man has brought a sack of cowries, or a goat, or an ox. He desires to speak to you." The ruler thanks all of them with a *nif kende* (thanks) and retires into his chamber. It is well known that not one out of fifty petitioners was given the opportunity to have his wishes heard. Those who were heard had first spoken to an attendant who, after being paid in advance, had put off their case indefinitely by stating that it would be dealt with next. . . . Since the monarch's days are so well filled, one easily understands why he finds it difficult to deal effectively with the internal and external affairs of his kingdom; in any case, Mossi country is in a period of decadence that will only be aggravated with time.[25]

The activities Binger considered frivolous were, on the contrary, important for the proper administration of the kingdom. The Mogho Naba had to receive petitions from the districts and transmit administrative orders to

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warriors as El Hadj Omar and Samory Touré surprised and puzzled many of their early visitors. Binger explains it as follows:

> Thanks to the primitive tribes that surrounded them like a rampart, the Mossi were spared the incursions of their powerful neighbors. This immunity cannot last much longer, because [Mogho Naba] Sanum is weak, has little spirit, and is badly counseled.[8]

Binger was partly correct in attributing the immunity of the Mossi to the presence of weaker groups on their borders. To the military adventurers of the period, the Mossi must have appeared invulnerable when compared to their weaker neighbors. Nevertheless, the Mossi declare that it was their vigilance and willingness to fight that prevented Samory Touré, among others, from invading their country.[9] They claim to have captured and executed nine of the ten spies he sent to survey their territory. The one spy who returned allegedly told Samory Touré that the Mossi were too strong to be attacked, because they banded together against all outsiders.

Crozat attributes the Mossi freedom from attack to miraculous and magical factors:

> There is widespread belief in surrounding territories that Mossi country is inviolable. Alone amid the troubled populations that surround it, it enjoys relative peace. It owes this to the very special protection of a deity, and also to the virtues of the special talismans owned by the ruler of Ouagadougou. The terror inspired by these charms is such that some years ago the leader of Gadiari's column suffered a mass desertion of his men when he tried to lead them to the conquest of Mossi country. He himself was killed, perhaps by his own *sofas* [soldiers]. This case cannot be expected to undermine belief in these presumptuous charms.[10]

This statement, like Binger's, contains an element of truth, but not in the way that Crozat believed. The Ouagadougou kingdom did have a series of ritual pacts with neighboring Mossi and non-Mossi groups. Crozat found that Mogho Naba Sanum was on "good terms" with the people of Fada-N'Gourma. He tells us that this friendship was maintained by a "curious custom" whereby the Ouagadougou ruler sent wives, captives, and horses from his predecessor's estate to the ruler of the Gurmanche.[11] Similarly, Pinchon, a British officer stationed in the Gold Coast at the beginning of the century, reports that there existed an ancient pact between the Mossi and the Mamprusi. This pact kept the ruler of each country from attacking the other on pain of death by the ancestors. Like the pact between the Mossi and the Gurmanche, this agreement was sanctioned by an annual gift of a horse, slaves, and cloth from the Mossi to the Mamprusi. Pinchon speculates that it was the existence of this pact that induced the Mamprusi

Wobogo. However, he did not have to intervene, because while still en route he heard that Ouagadougou had fallen."[28] Thanks to this type of aid, the Mogho Naba was able to gather quite a large army, a fact that contradicts Crozat's belief that the Mogho Naba was a "king without an army."[29]

The early Mogho Nanamse used to accompany their armies into the field, but this practice was later abandoned and was revived periodically only by the more adventurous rulers. (The last ruler to die in warfare was Mogho Naba Doulougou [ca. 1800].) However, it was the Mogho Naba's duty to greet the army when it came to Ouagadougou, to beat the royal war drum, and to turn the troops over to the Tansoba. This officer served as commander in chief of the army, and was assisted by the Gounga Naba, a provincial minister, who served as his aide-de-camp. The Gounga Naba was expected to die rather than retreat in battle, especially if the Tansoba was killed. Two other ministers, the Kamsaogho Naba and the Larhalle Naba, also accompanied the army. The later Baloum Nanamse did not venture into battle, because they had to attend to the personal needs of the Mogho Naba. In early times, however, they accompanied their sovereigns into battle and fought alongside them. The Ouidi Naba never went to war, because it was his duty to look after the kingdom. He had to ensure the interests of all the people even if the royal army was defeated, the country invaded, and the ruler killed or forced to flee. The Samande Naba went to war and served as chief of the infantry.

Scouts preceded each district contingent as the army marched off to battle. Within the contingent, the younger warriors marched in front, followed by older men. It was the duty of the more experienced warriors to make sure that the younger men did not break ranks and run under the stress of battle. Behind the foot soldiers came the cavalry, composed of nobles and of the few commoners who possessed horses. Behind these came the district chief, surrounded by his own palace guard. Several heralds known as *yumba* (sing. *yuma*) accompanied the district forces to exhort them to fight. As the men marched to battle the yumba shouted:

> Men! Your ancestors were not slaves. They were men. They were stronger than anyone else. They did not bathe with water; they bathed with blood. Do you wish to return home to drink millet water and eat bread? Never! A man does not eat bread or drink millet water; a man fights. Your ancestors were not afraid of anyone; you must not be afraid of anyone. Even if you are killed today, you must march ahead, beat your enemies, and take their villages. You must not be afraid!

Mossi armies on the march used scouts to keep a sharp lookout for the enemy or for any evidence that he was aware of impending attack. The tactics these scouts used to avoid detection, such as camouflaging themselves

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less of the amount of millet harvested from the Mogho Naba's fields, there had to be one hundred baskets full of grain. If the number of baskets filled with the Mogho Naba's grain fell short of the mark, the serfs and slaves had to make up the difference with the produce of their own fields. The ceremony concluded with sacrifices to the royal ancestors, after which the Mogho Naba's wives, daughters, and sisters gave beer and kola nuts to the laborers.

As head of the central government, the Mogho Naba received revenue in the form of money and livestock which the district chiefs collected from the village people. These were given to him during an elaborate annual ceremony called the "Basgha" ("feast of the royal ancestors"). Several days before this post-harvest festival, the district chiefs and their retainers arrived in the capital and lodged with their provincial ministers. At a designated time during the ceremony, the district chiefs and nobles went to the palace. In provincial contingents and led by their ministers, they walked up to the sovereign's throne and gave the Mossi salute. After they had returned to their places, their servants gave the royal pages the presents they had brought to the palace.

The Dimdamba apparently made their annual contribution to the Mogho Naba at the time of the Basgha. There is one report that they took this opportunity to send gifts to the ruler's son, the Djiba Naba, as well. The Dimdamba customarily sent the Mogho Naba part of the goods they had seized in combat against non-Mossi peoples, as well as a tax (*jado*) out of the goods they had inherited from their predecessors.[3] There is also some evidence that the Mogho Naba solicited goods from the Dimdamba at other times. Crozat says:

> During my first visit to Yako, three envoys from Ouagadougou were at the chief's house. They were tax collectors. They had come to offer the vassal a silver bracelet sent by the sovereign. The Yako Naba responded by sending horses, captives, and cowries to Ouagadougou.[4]

Crozat could not understand this reciprocity between the Mogho Naba and his vassals, and questions whether the Mogho Naba really collected taxes from them. He concludes that the Mogho Naba did receive taxes, "but these are never given to him except in the form of presents which are reciprocated."[5] Crozat found it puzzling and disturbing that many of the Dimdamba had not given the Mogho Naba any "taxes" for several years. He indicated, moreover, that they did not wish to pay taxes to the Ouagadougou ruler even under the guise of an exchange of presents. This was especially true of the Yatenga Naba, who had not sent the Mogho Naba any presents for six or seven years prior to 1890. Crozat surmised that

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631 651 643 114 [648] [669] because of this delinquency, the Mogho Naba might hesitate to come to the aid of any of his vassals if a general war broke out. It is true that the Mogho Naba did not aid the Yatenga ruler when the French arrived. But whether this was because of his failure to pay taxes, or because the French conquest of the Yatenga coincided with a civil war there, we shall probably never know. We do know that many of the Mogho Naba's vassals came to his aid when the French finally arrived at Ouagadougou. It is my opinion that the gifts exchanged between Yatenga and Ouagadougou were not "tributary," but were more in the nature of tokens of friendship between two peers.

643 645 692 651 [431] The Mogho Naba and his provincial ministers also received revenue as a function of their judicial roles. The nature and disposition of the fines levied against legal offenders were discussed in Chapter V. The Mogho Naba's fees came in the form of the traditional gifts the litigants gave him even before their cases were tried. These gifts were never regarded as bribes, for this would have contradicted the Mossi axiom that "the truth is at Ouagadougou."

643 651 634 768 [428] The Mogho Naba inherited all the property of the Kamsaogho Naba, and claimed all the property of district chiefs who died without close relatives. He also received inheritance taxes (fado) from the estates of deceased district chiefs. In collecting the fado, the Mogho Naba first retained the horse on which the messenger came to announce the chief's death. He reciprocated by sending envoys with cowries and animals to be offered to their common ancestors at the chief's funeral. After the funeral, the envoys claimed the dead chief's quiver of arrows to take to Ouagadougou for deposit with those of other dead chiefs. Then they demanded the fado, and jestingly told the heirs that the Mogho Naba would be satisfied with nothing less than "a thousand of everything" (*tusri bumbu fa*) the deceased had possessed: wives, slaves, horses, cows, goats, chickens, articles of clothing, and so on. The heirs pleaded poverty and jokingly gave the envoys a few old and sickly animals, old chickens, tattered pieces of clothing, etc. Eventually, they handed out the fado, which usually consisted of livestock, clothing, food, weapons, jewelry, cowries, and even slaves. Lastly, they gave the envoys the chief's ceremonial horse and presents for themselves.

643 645 651 439 [487] The Mogho Naba and his ministers collected a considerable amount of revenue from the traders who visited Ouagadougou and the larger market towns and village markets throughout the kingdom.* The Mossi (especially the assimilated Yarse) were good traders, and they benefited from their country's strategic location between the Sahara and the forest regions. According to Barth, some six caravan routes crossed the country, linking

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district chief's wrath. Thus, there was some method in the collection of this tribute and certain expectations had to be met, even though many of the contributors may have felt that their gifts were voluntary.

In direct contrast, Dim Delobson, himself a chief, states that Mossi chiefs demanded a stipulated amount from their villagers. He adds, however, that the tribute "varied in amount according to the resources of the contributors," and that the district chief set the "amount of cowries and grain due from each village in accordance with the number of its inhabitants."[34] According to him, the rate of assessment was usually 100 cowries for a married man and 50 for an adult bachelor (apparently, this difference was an acknowledgment of the woman's contribution to her husband's wealth). In addition, each adult male was assessed 10 baskets of millet of about 100 pounds each. Dim Delobson adds that to these exactions the district chief added his own contributions to the Mogho Naba, usually in the form of cattle.

It seems that Dim Delobson rationalized and regularized a rather informal system of contributions. The present-day Mossi declare that soil differences in the villages and variations in rainfall prevented a district chief from demanding a set tribute, because no one could tell whether a crop would be good or bad. Only a ruler's informers could tell him how much he should receive each year, and the chief based his exactions on this report. Several of my respondents agreed with Dim Delobson that the district chief provided mostly cattle for the annual tribute to the Mogho Naba, and that the village people furnished cowries, small animals, and grain.

A district chief was seldom wealthy, because he always had to use his revenue to fulfill unexpected obligations toward his subjects, his superiors in the political hierarchy, and his household. He had to be generous to his subjects, providing millet water, millet beer, and the more expensive imported kola nuts for those who visited and conferred with him daily. He was expected to provide food and shelter for the countless strangers who settled in his district, until they could provide for themselves. He also lodged and fed the messengers who brought him orders from the capital, and gave them gifts to take back to the provincial ministers. And he had to provide goods for the many members of his family who depended upon him. Finally, in the event of crop failure or famine in any of his villages, he had to provide grain from his granaries to feed the hungry. "How could he do otherwise? Was he not a 'father' to his people?"

The expectation that the district chief should provide hospitality to his subjects was so strong that those chiefs or princes who were deprived of an income for any reason often resorted to banditry to fulfil their obliga-

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they might take the lives and property of their subjects. There are many stories of avaricious chiefs who convicted wealthy commoners of spurious crimes and had them executed or banished in order to seize their wealth. There are also stories of twin tricksters, Raogo, a boy, and Poko, a girl, two *enfants terribles* who always succeeded in outwitting and killing avaricious chiefs. When I asked a district chief to explain the significance of the Raogo and Poko tales, he replied that they were "meaningless stories told by children who do not understand how difficult it is for a chief to command and protect men." This remark prompted one of his officials to add that in olden days, people gladly supported the Mogho Naba and his chiefs in order to be safe from their enemies—a statement which might have been made by a conscientious government official anywhere. However, whether commoners or chiefs, all Mossi believed that men must have government, and that without it chaos would prevail.

The Mossi political organization was subject to severe strains. For one thing, its economic basis was not very strong. True, goods and services were channeled to the capital from the smallest areas, and in time this permitted the establishment of increasingly complex governmental structures. Nevertheless, the Mossi fiscal system was not highly developed, and much of the revenue the rulers received came to them in the form of legal fees and gifts. Moreover, most of these revenues were irregular in nature.

Despite this fact, the Mossi believed that their rulers were wealthy—and there can be no doubt that they were wealthier than their subjects. Nevertheless, visiting Europeans found little difference between the standard of living of the chiefs and that of the people. Binger would have us believe that Mogho Naba Sanum bragged so much about imaginary wealth, including 10,000 horses, that he "managed to convince himself of it."[36] Binger's subsequent remarks about Sanum's resources are illuminating even if somewhat biased, because they throw light on the economic basis of the Ouagadougou kingdom. He tells us that Sanum's revenues were

> not well regulated. He lives on gifts and offerings which people have brought him with the aim of obtaining justice, or to demand something from him. He sometimes sends a band of men to capture slaves in Kipirsi country, or at least supports such ventures. But these revenues, like those of all the black chiefs, are not sufficient, because these men are prone to squander their resources. As a result, these sovereigns are compelled to use expedients in order to procure horses and other commodities. Thus, like the rulers of Tieba, Pegue, and Kong, Naba Sanum still has captives in villages devoted to agriculture, but he does not take proper care of these villages. If he does not receive enough millet in the form of gifts, he must sell his slaves in order to procure it.[37]

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Binger's statement about the "squandering" to which "all the black chiefs" are prone reveals his ignorance of the nature, role, and function of West African chiefs in general and of Mossi chiefs in particular. These men were often the center of redistribution systems that embraced their entire territory. The Mossi chiefs did not necessarily squander their resources when they used them to support their household, their administrative staff, and even visitors to their realm. A rather large portion of the millet the Mogho Naba received was not even used by his own household, but was held for gifts to visiting strangers. Binger himself benefited from the generosity of Mogho Naba Sanum, and he provides us with excellent data about how Boukary Koutou distributed his resources: "I can say that never has a chief given me food, kola nuts, and beer as often as he did. I received things to eat two or three times a day."[28] No Mossi chief could have done less. This was a role that chiefs had to play, and they lost power and prestige if they proved inhospitable or parsimonious either to visiting strangers or to their own subjects.

Binger's lack of insight into the economic basis of the Mossi political organization also kept him from obtaining a clear understanding of the political system itself. For example, he saw the loose political organization of the Mossi as a sign of decadence, and felt that the Ouagadougou kingdom was too weak to survive for any length of time:

> Before long the Mossi empire will break up, and the country will be organized into a confederacy like Beledougou and Yatenga. This is an event that we Europeans can only favor. Experience has shown us that as soon as a Negro chief commands more than 2,000 people, he dreams of empire; his needs grow, and he tries to expand. Since his revenues are small, he labors under a deficit, which he must remedy with slave raids. In a confederacy the chiefs do not reach this point so rapidly. As soon as one of them begins to rise, the others can band together and nip his ambition in the bud.[29]

It is quite true that many of the political systems in the western Sudan had a loose character similar to that of a "confederacy." This was not due to the vigilance of neighboring chiefs, however. From time to time, such powerful rulers as Sundiata, Mansa Musa, Sonni-Ali, El Hadj Omar, and Samory Touré did arise and conquer vast areas, but they were unable to sustain their gains over extended periods.

The political organization of the Mossi was not decadent but structurally weak—its economic base was never strong enough to support a higher degree of centralization. Strong chiefs only tested the limits of the system; they could not change the system itself.

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The Mossi were probably brought to the attention of modern Europe by T. E. Bowdich, an Englishman who went to Ashanti in 1817 to sign a trade agreement with the Asantehene. While at Kumasi, Bowdich diligently sought information about the lands in the interior, but was relatively unsuccessful because his hosts pleaded ignorance. Nevertheless, he did find out that "five journies [days] from Yngwa [Yendi] is Mosee, a warlike but less visited kingdom: it consists of many states, but the superior monarch is named Billa, and the capital Kookoopella."[4] This misinformation is interesting because it shows that Bowdich's respondent had precise information only about Koupela, a town located near the great caravan center of Poitenga. Similarly, the linguistic data reported by Bowdich are for Dagomba rather than Mossi.

Another Englishman, Joseph Dupuis, led a trade mission to Kumasi in 1819, and obtained data on the Mossi that are surprisingly accurate given the reluctance of middlemen traders to reveal commercial information. He reports that Ashanti traders "sometimes travel as far as Aughoa, the Magho, and to the east of Kasogho. Aughoa is distant from Coomassie twenty-five journies by the Salgha and Yandy Roads, which would give a distance of 360 British miles. Their object in frequenting this place is to collect that vegetable substance by the name of shea butter."[5] There is no doubt that "Aughoa" is really "Ouagha," the term often used by the Mossi to refer to their capital, and the distance between Kumasi and Ouagadougou as reported by Dupuis is approximately the same as the road mileage today. The name "Magho," which appears from time to time in these early documents, seems to be none other than "Mogho," the traditional name of Mossi country. "Kasogho" probably refers to the section of Ouagadougou that was controlled by the Kamsaogho Naba.

The Hausa merchants knew a great deal about the Mossi and the resources of their territory, but only with difficulty did the English trader Hugh Clapperton persuade Sultan Mohammed Bello of Sokoto to give him the following information:

> The country of Mouchier or Mouchi is situated to the west of Ghurma. It is vast and possesses a gold mine, rivers, forests, and mountains. It is inhabited by tribes of the Sudan who possess many fast horses and large donkeys. Their king is called Wagadougou; their asses are sent down to the Gondja to carry the drums of the Army.[6]

Either Clapperton or his informant obviously confused the capital of the Mossi with their king, and included parts of Dagomba in their territory.

Barth, who traveled extensively in the Sudan between 1849 and 1855, did

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not enter Mossi territory. Nevertheless, he obtained rather precise information on the important caravan routes leading from Timbuktu through the Mossi trade centers of Ouagadougou, Kaya, Yako, and Koupela, down to Salaga and other towns in Ghana, and even across to Sansane Mango in Togoland. His data on the Mossi are invaluable:

> The whole triangle interposed between the Niger toward the north, and the country of the Eastern Mandingoes or Wangarawa toward the south, appears to be inhabited by a single race of people whose language, although they are divided into several states and nations, nevertheless appears originally to have been the same stock. It is very probable that this race in ancient times occupied the whole upper course of the Niger, and that this tract may have been wrested from it in later times by the Songhai and the Mandingoes, especially that section of the latter which is generally called Bambara. These are the Gourma toward the N.E., the Tombo toward the N.W., and between them the Mossi. . . . The strongest among these pagan kingdoms five centuries ago, and even at the present moment, is that of the Mossi, although the country is split into a number of small principalities, almost totally independent of each other, and paying only some slight homage to the ruler of the principality of Woghodogo.[7]

Europe learned more about the Mossi from Sigismund Koelle, who visited Sierra Leone in 1854. His informant was one Andrew Dixon, who had lived in Koupela before being captured and sold into slavery. He furnished information on the location of the Mossi, their wars with the Busansi, and their important commercial and political relations with the Ashanti.[8] Koelle's report, taken in conjunction with the reports of Dupuis, Bowdich, Clapperton, and Barth, shows that the Ashanti, like the Hausa and other coastal peoples, were protecting their trade when they attempted to isolate the peoples of the interior from the Europeans. But as soon as the British defeated the Ashanti in the war of 1873–74, the Sudan was opened and adventurers poured in. In 1877 and 1878, two missionaries of the Basel Mission visited the northern regions of Ghana, and subsequently gave a good description of Mossi commerce in that area.[9] Lonsdale, who visited Salaga in 1881, found among the traders in the market "the Mossi with his cattle, sheep, and slaves—these latter, generally Gurunsi, are not exposed for sale in the street or market, but can be seen where the owner resides."[10]

The activities of the various European nations in West Africa and other regions at this time led to military and diplomatic difficulties, which the Berlin Conference of 1884–85 was convened to resolve. Agreement was reached to assign "spheres of influence" to the various European nations, to regulate trade, and to provide for arbitration between rival claimants of conquered or "protected" territories. In West Africa, this meant the end

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of those chiefs whom we like, in those countries on the other side of the Niger which have been given to us? Perhaps people will tell you again that everywhere we go, we change everything and wish to be the only masters. Have we changed something in Kenedougou, whose *fama* [chief] has been our friend for a long time? We have, it is true, deposed Ahmadou of Segou, but he waged war upon us, and Segou is not his. . . .

The Mogho Naba listened to Crozat in silence and later sent a servant to him with an equally diplomatic message:

> The Mogho Naba is very happy that you came, and thanks the chiefs who sent you; he wishes to declare his friendship with the white men who are in the West, especially with the French. He will see them with pleasure when they come again to the Mossi. They will be well received by us. . . . The chief declares his alliance and friendship with the French. . . . He will be pleased to see other Frenchmen come here, provided that they are not too numerous. As for your black traders and French merchants, they can come and trade with the Mossi in all security: he will not maltreat them.
>
> On his part, the chief will send his people to trade in your possessions. As for you . . . you are now free to depart whenever you wish, and by whichever route you choose. The chief will give you four men to accompany you to the border.[26]

In his report to his superiors, Crozat suggests that the widespread belief in the Mossi immunity to attack by neighboring populations is based on imperfect knowledge of their actual strength and fighting ability. He questions the Mogho Naba's riches and power, declares that "he does not have an army," and concludes by stating that the commoners are exploited by their rulers and by the Moslem holy men and "would welcome the Europeans as rulers." He thus shows quite clearly that the Mossi were correct in viewing him as an enemy.[27] Marc, who had no reason to be hostile to Crozat, commented: "It seems to us that Crozat is somewhat unfair in his notes on the indigenous culture of the Mossi. It is possible that the total failure of his mission made him rather intolerant."[28]

Crozat was followed the next year by another French emissary, Lt.-Col. P. L. Monteil. The chief of Yako detained him briefly on the advice of a Moslem who had had unpleasant experiences with Europeans. When Monteil finally reached Ouagadougou and asked for an audience with the Mogho Naba, he was informed that the ruler would not see him and had given orders for him to be expelled from the country. Monteil had no recourse but to leave, but he made this observation: "One important result of this journey augurs well for the future. We were able to travel throughout Mossi country without difficulty."[29] He made a careful survey of the country which was used to good effect by his countrymen five years later.

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9. In Dim Delobson's account (p. 60), an unnamed wife of the Mogho Naba ran away, and he allegedly tried to follow her because she was the only person in his household who knew how to cook his favorite food.

It is interesting that the Mossi have a tradition in which their ruler undergoes the same experience as many a Mossi husband, namely, being betrayed by his wife. It is also interesting that Mogho Naba Waraga is the ruler named in this incident. He is the ruler who waged a five-year-long civil war with one of his vassals. It may well be that his ministers devised the myth about his wife in order to prevent him from leaving the capital to fight.

10. The Mossi practice of tasting food before giving it to another person is obviously connected with the fear of poison. The Mossi believe that only a boorish person would give another person something to eat without first tasting it himself.

11. The full significance of this ceremony is unclear, for the Mossi hesitate to talk about it. It is known that the "sacred fire" is linked to the nocturnal visits of the royal ancestors. But the relationship of the fire to another sacred fire kept in Koubri district (about seventeen miles from Ouagadougou) is not known.

Faithful to Mossi tradition or ignorant of the true nature of the ceremony, Dim Delobson says nothing about the ceremony and does not mention the presence of the namtibo. However, he does report that the palace guards would kill anyone who approached the place where the rite was being performed (p. 62).

12. There are several traditions concerning female regents. However, I believe that they may have their basis in the role the Mogho Naba's daughter played during the interregnum.

13. Mossi genealogies show that only in one case in which the nam passed from a Mogho Naba to his brother did the former Mogho Naba's sons receive districts from their uncle, the new ruler. Since it is difficult to believe that the eleven other Mogho Nanamse who were succeeded by their brothers died without issue, it can only be concluded that the descendants of a ruler who did not inherit the nam were ignored by their uncles in power.

14. To this council could be added other men whose experience was valued. For example, the Baloum Naba was called upon in 1942 to give advice about a successor to Kom.

15. Dim Delobson, pp. 130–32.

16. It is interesting that the sheepskin garb of the Mossi pretenders is similar to the dress of the chiefs among the smaller tribal groups of the Voltaic culture area. If we can assume that culture traits characteristic of ritual and ceremonial practices tend to persist longer than most other traits, we might have evidence that the complex Mossi state evolved from the political organizations found among the smaller local groups.

17. The "naming of a name" speech is part of most Mossi *rites de passage*, and is often used to brag about some achievement or to cast aspersions on one's enemies. Most newly elected monarchs pledge good government, brag about their elevation, and vilify their enemies.

In his inaugural speech Naba Kom II said, "When plenty of water falls during the rainy season, the rivers and seas are glad because they are enlarged." "Kom" means "water," and Kom's speech meant that he pledged to bring happiness to all his subjects.

Boukary Koutou insulted his listeners by declaring, "Even if a hundred ghosts join together, they cannot harm an elephant." He was called Mogho Naba Wobogo ("elephant").

18. It is said that if the amulets were stolen during the interregnum, the thief had to be elected Mogho Naba; if they were stolen afterwards, the ruler lost the basis for the mystical quality of leadership and authority he had inherited from his ancestors.

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000 19. There is a curious story among the people of Nobere district that Mogho Naba Mottoba (who reigned in the seventeenth century) was not a Mossi but a Fulani who was given the nam after he chanced upon the installation ceremony and assassinated the newly elected man during the night. This story is denied in Ouagadougou; in fact, it contradicts the genealogical records of the ruling dynasty. However, the genealogy does show that Mottoba's father, Mogho Naba Guiliga, had succeeded his brother, and it is possible that there was dynastic rivalry for the nam between Mottoba and the former Mogho Naba's son.

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20. This rite was performed during the installation of the present Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, although it is hardly recognizable as described in *Newsweek* (December 9, 1957, p. 48): "A man named Moussa Congo assumed the name of Kougri Naba last week and became the 35th Mogho Naba of the Mossi in the capital city of Ouagadougou in the Upper Volta region of French West Africa. Son of Emperor Issoufou Congo, Kougri Naba, as the new Mogho Naba, has one white horse, 200 wives, and 8,000 warriors, who danced around his palace ten times."

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21. This practice has apparently lapsed since Mogho Naba Kougri moved into the modern concrete palace built for his father, Mogho Naba Sagha II.

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22. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, pp. 569–70. Tauxier claims the Mogho Nanamse used the pages for homosexual purposes on Fridays in order to circumvent the Moslem prohibition against intercourse with women on this holy day. Homosexuality is rare among the Mossi, as Tauxier himself admits, and most Mossi deny that the Mogho Nanamse ever resorted to it. However, one respondent did state that he had heard about homosexuality among certain past rulers.

23. Crozat, p. 4849.

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24. When Mogho Naba Kom II died under mysterious circumstances in 1942, it was rumored that he had committed suicide rather than reduce the number of his wives as ordered by the administration under the influence of the Catholic missionaries. Kom allegedly held that no one can inherit a sovereign's wife during his lifetime. Therefore, in order to avoid loss of status by seeing his wives go to commoners, he chose death so they would be inherited by nobles.

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25. The statement in *Newsweek* (December 9, 1957, p. 48) that Kougri has two hundred wives is untrue.

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26. Intermarriage between the Mossi and the Fulani has produced a people known as the Simili-Mossi. Nevertheless, the Mossi are strongly prejudiced against the Fulani, especially against the women, stating that the Moaga who has sexual intercourse with a Fulani woman must bathe in nine different rivers before he becomes clean. The basis of this prejudice appears to be that Fulani women are not cultivators and therefore are unacceptable as Mossi wives.

27. Mossi women know a great deal about the history and traditions of their people. But they never indicate that they do except during such rituals, when they are required to play certain roles.

28. Dim Delobson, p. 96.

29. Dim Delobson (p. 101) states that there are "sacred things" in this village, but I have been unable to substantiate his report.

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30. Dim Delobson (p. 104) gives the classic explanation of this nighttime ride. On his ride from Bere to Djiba, the mounted prince must try to touch a certain branch of a certain tree. If he is destined to succeed his father, he will succeed in touching the branch; if he is not, the branch will magically withdraw at his approach.

I visited the area in which this ritual reportedly took place, but the people in the vicinity denied that such a tree existed.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

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32. IFAN (Compte Rendu No. 429). There are many other rumors concerning Kom's death. In a book praising the loyalty of the Africans to the Free French Gov-

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15. *Ibid.*, p. 673.
16. Delafosse, II, 128–29.
17. Binger, II, 502.
18. Crozat, p. 4849.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 4822.

20. The structure of the Mossi kingdoms and their relationship with the autonomous principalities make it difficult to determine the exact number of districts within each unit. For example, the Mossi people always claimed that the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou was sovereign over "333" chiefs (cf. Binger, I, 502). However, since the Mossi always associate the number 3 with males, any number giving a multiple of threes is suspect. Binger stated that some of the chiefs referred to as part of the 333 were no more than village chiefs. However, Tauxier (*Le Noir du Soudan*, p. 567), describing the kingdom of Ouagadougou, states, "At the top of this hierarchy is the king, the Mogho Naba, paramount chief of the Mossi, residing at Ouagadougou. To give at least an idea of the relative importance of this empire, without going further than, say, the cercle of Ouagadougou, there were eight provinces comprising 300 *cantons* [districts], 5,000 villages or small towns, and 861,700 inhabitants."

While voicing the myth that the Mogho Naba had "under his control 333 chiefs or Nabas," Dim Delobson actually gives only about 150 chiefs in his list of district and other chiefs (pp. 46, 288–97). It was impossible for me to get any idea of the number of chiefs, because the Mossi hierarchy has changed radically since 1905.

21. Dim Delobson, p. 63.
22. Cheron, "Contribution," p. 651.
23. The Mossi did not acknowledge the defeat of Mogho Naba Wobogo by the French until the Ouidi Naba surrendered to the invaders and installed a ruler they had chosen.
24. Archives, Document 1G-334. Lambert describes Karfo as "a curious figure who unfortunately is not well known."
25. Binger, I, 465.
26. Dim Delobson, pp. 15–45, *passim*.
27. It appears that the monarchs found fault with their district chiefs most readily when they had sons or other relatives in need of districts to govern. Since a possessor of the nam could not be deprived of it while alive, he had to be accused of some crime and executed. Koabga was replaced as Doulougou Naba by Lassanne Congo (called Naba Kouliga), a son of the Mogho Naba. On the other hand, when Naba Pusha of Nobere district fled rather than commit suicide or start a civil war, he was replaced by his own brother, who became Naba Soulougou.
28. Dim Delobson, p. 44.
29. Cheron, "Contribution," p. 655.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Mangin, p. 25.
2. Mangin does not discuss rape, but reported that an "abductor" was beaten and put in irons. The girl was returned to her family, and if she gave birth to a child, it was killed (pp. 26–27).
3. Dim Delobson, p. 55.
4. Most of my informants state quite clearly that the district chiefs did not have the right to impose the death penalty, but could do so if they were discreet about it and did not take advantage of their subjects. But Dim Delobson states: "Contrary to what people generally believe, the Kombere—the chief of the *canton* [district]—also had the power of life and death over his subjects. How many persons have been put to death only because they were wealthy? How many village chiefs have been killed by the district chiefs in their territories without the Mogho Naba's intervention?" (pp. 55–56).
5. Dim Delobson (p. 56) insists that justice was free of charge, but added that

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plaintiffs gave the chiefs the traditional presents of a white cock and a sack containing from 200 to 1,000 cowries.

6. Mangin declares: "Most of the troubles which arise between one Mossi and another derive from their wives and from their debts; yet it may not be said, as a general rule, that women are unhappy or ill treated" (p. 39; see also p. 33). But cf. Dim Delobson, pp. 182, 185.

7. Mangin states that in Koupela a recidivous thief was "led to the market place with a rope around his neck; he was supplied with an abundance of meat and beer, and then clubbed to death at the foot of a tree" (p. 25). I doubt whether this practice was very widespread, because the Mossi were afraid to anger the market Tengkouga (earth spirits) by spilling blood in the market place.

8. Cf. Ruelle, pp. 679 ff.

9. Binger, I, 462.

10. But cf. Marc, p. 134.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Sa'di, pp. 45–46. The date of this battle and the location of Benka are unknown. However, Delafosse (II, 141) believes that it was located in the Massina region on the shores of Lake Debo.

2. Sa'di, pp. 112–13.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 114–15.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 121–23. The chronicle also states (p. 168) that these Mossi captives were installed in a special ward of Askia's capital, a practice apparently followed by all victorious Sudanese groups including the Mossi.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

6. See Delafosse, II, 143–45, and Tauxier, *Le Noir du Yatenga*, pp. 88–91.

7. Crozat, p. 4822.

8. Binger, I, 502.

9. Almamy Samory Touré was the last empire-builder in the western Sudan. He was defeated by the French in 1898 and exiled to Gabon, where he died in 1900. See Binger, I, 84ff.

10. Crozat, p. 4837.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 4849.

12. Archives, Document 1G-315 (1903–1904).

13. Crozat, p. 4849.

14. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, p. 463.

15. Mangin, p. 13.

16. Cheron, "Contribution," pp. 655, 675–76.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 673.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 676.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 654.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 685–86.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 674.

22. Ruelle, p. 686.

23. Mangin, p. 62.

24. Binger, I, 473.

25. Cheron, "Contribution," p. 660.

26. Crozat, p. 4849.

27. Mangin, p. 12.

28. For example, when Mogho Naba Sanum's army attacked Boussouma, it made "such a rapid retreat" that Ligidi, the Boussouma Dim, could only counterattack the army's rear guard (Cheron, "Contribution," p. 676).

29. Archives, Document 15G-190 (1897–98).

30. Mangin, p. 12.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Dim Delobson, p. 21.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

34. Cf. Southall (pp. 246–60) for a discussion of the "segmentary" state in Africa.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Dim Delobson, pp. 153ff.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 251–54.
3. Cheron, "Contribution," p. 674.
4. Crozat, p. 4849.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Skinner, "Trade and Markets," pp. 237–78.
7. Barth, III, 644–49.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 202–4.
9. Dubois, pp. 282–92, 300.
10. Great Britain, Parliamentary papers: Cd. 788–27, No. 357, Acc. Papers, Vol. LXIV (1902).
11. Marc, p. 178.
12. Binger, I, 467.
13. Crozat, p. 4849.
14. Binger, I, 465.
15. Mangin, p. 23.
16. Dim Delobson, pp. 85–86.
17. Ruelle, p. 679.
18. Bovill, p. 244.
19. Gautier, p. 139; cf. Mangin, p. 112.
20. Cf. Sa'di, p. 168.
21. The chief of the Kamboinse was the only Mossi "chief" to possess a stool, which is indicative of an Akan origin. The Akan origin of this group is further supported by Koelle's evidence: a Mossi informant told him that the Mossi called the Ashanti "Kamboinse" (Koelle, p. 6).
22. Skinner, "The Mossi 'Pogsioure,'" pp. 20–22.
23. Cf. Ouédraogo and Prost, pp. 16–18.
24. Dim Delobson, p. 25.
25. Binger, I, 470.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 502–4.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 504–5.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 456.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 502.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Cf. Dim Delobson, p. 156. He speculates that the Mogho Naba himself sacrificed the animals in the presence of his senior wife and courtiers.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
3. Tauxier (*Le Noir du Yatenga*, p. 379) reports that a comparable ceremony among the Yatenga Mossi was called the "Bega," and that in reality it was a Fulse ceremony "adopted by the Mossi." According to him, both the Fulse and the Mossi held this festival in order to obtain good harvests the following year, and made sacrifices to "the ancestors, to the Earth, and to God."
4. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, p. 588.
5. Dim Delobson's description (pp. 148 ff) of the Tense differs somewhat from that given to me by my respondents. According to his version, the Tansoba played the role I have ascribed to the Larhalle Naba. Furthermore, he states that the Tense was held on Friday, an impossible fact since Saturday is the Mossi "day of the dead." In any case, all of my respondents insisted that Saturday, and not Friday, was the day on which the Tense was held. It is possible that Dim Delobson mistook the eve of the festival for its beginning, in which case his error is understandable. In most other respects our descriptions are not too different.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
7. There is a widespread tradition in Mossi country that the Tenkodogo Naba made and still makes similar sacrifices at Kouroungoutenga and Sansabloga, two important earth shrines. There is a controversy about whether human sacrifices were ever offered there. The missionaries in the region claim they were. The Mossi deny this and accuse the missionaries of slander.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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8. Cf. Marc, p. 156. 9. Cf. Fortes, pp. 258–71.
10. Skinner, "The Diffusion of Islam," pp. 659–69.
11. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, pp. 585–86.
12. Dim Delobson, p. 205. 13. Crozat, p. 4820.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 4822. 15. *Ibid.*, p. 4835.
16. Binger, I, 452. 17. *Ibid.*, p. 456.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 452–56.
19. Archives, Document 15G-190 (1897–98). Instructions left to Captain Scal by Destenave, June 1897.

CHAPTER NINE

1. Marc, p. 17.
2. Barth, III, 595. Although it is possible that the Wolof prince Bemoy did hear about the Mossi, he was mistaken about the name of their ruler. Interestingly enough, the title "Ogane" is not too dissimilar from Hogon, the title of head men among the Dogon (Habe or Kado) whom the Mossi had pushed into the hills of Bandiagara. Cf. Bascom, p. 24.
3. Barth, III, 606. 4. Bowdich, p. 180.
5. Dupuis, Appendix CVII. 6. Clapperton, II, 323.
7. Barth, III, 643–49. As cited earlier, Barth states that the Portuguese got reports about the Mossi in the year 1533 "from the wrong side, namely from Benin." This may not have been altogether "the wrong side," however, for Barth gives us data on caravans from Mossi country to Sansane Mango in Togoland that indicate how news about the Mossi might have traveled from the interior to Benin city in Nigeria.
8. Koelle, p. 6. Dixon, who seems to have been one of the few captured Mossi sold to the West, reports: "Mose is west of Gurma, east of Andemtenga, where a different language is spoken. Mose is also two days journey from Butmera, where the same language is spoken; four days from Bulega [Bolga tanga], the language still the same, and confederate with Kambonse, i.e. Asante; two days from Yaongo, with still the same language; six days from Bosanse which is at enmity with Mose and where people bore their lips, and often tie them together with grass, and whose language is different from Mose; four days from Busma also a different language, and in which country there is a very high mountain (Tanga) from which those who ascend never come back again [probably a reference to Plimpikou, the Mossi holy mountain]; three or four weeks from Kambonse, i.e. Asante. Kupeala is four days from Wardyga [Ouagadougou] the Mossi capital, whither the king of Asante often sent presents; and one month from Salak [Salaga], an Asante town, where they bring kola nuts."
9. Marc, p. 30.
10. Great Britain, Parliamentary papers xlvi, 1882.
11. The people of Nobere, Manga, and other districts surrounding Bere have traditions about Krause, who is remembered as the first white-skinned person ever seen in those parts. The color of his skin was attributed to the fact that, "like the fish," he had come out of the sea.
12. Krause, pp. 92 ff. Although there is no evidence to this effect in the literature, it appears certain that Mossi government officials knew of Krause's visit. They treated most travelers in the following manner: "After entering a town the party is given in charge of a man usually termed 'housemaster.' It is his duty to exercise surveillance over the action of the stranger and to report the result to the authorities. . . . The trader conducts his business through his 'housemaster,' who usually makes a handsome gain by acting as middleman (G. E. Ferguson, quoted in Wolfson, p. 199).

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
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larger markets there were and are solid stalls which are built and tenanted by merchants. In the small district and village markets, these stalls are built out of millet stalks which offer little but protection against the noonday sun on market days. Men build these structures for their womenfolk and for themselves. Some of the shelters which are not used for trading serve as galleries where the young blades look out and comment on the passing scene. Others are used as meeting places by adult men who sit and discuss all sorts of affairs. Still others are used by the older men, who gather there to arrange marriages between their several families, wait for gifts from younger men who seek wives, or spend a great deal of time reminiscing about their youthful adventures. Those persons who do not have such shelters sit in the sun or use grass lean-tos as protection from the sun.

Except in the large towns, Mossi markets are held between the hours of 10:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M. every fourth day. In the larger towns there are daily markets, but these remained unimportant until today when they serve a growing urban population. The capital city of Wagadougou now even has an "evening" market which opens about 4:00 P.M. and closes at about 9:00 P.M. In addition, numerous daily markets have sprung up in many of its wards. The three-day markets are, however, the traditional type, and they are still the most numerous through the country. By "three-day market" I mean that a market is held one day, not held over the two following days, and then held again on the next day. These markets also have a 21-day cycle from one *Ragakasanga* or *Rag'kasanga* ("larger market") on a Friday to another *Rag'kasanga* on a Friday three weeks later, a total of seven markets between the two important ones. The people give no adequate explanation for the observance of the three-day cycle or the 21-day cycle. One man did suggest that it took the women three days to prepare beer and this was why markets could not be held more often, but even he did not speculate about the 21-day cycle.[10] This same man did point out, however, that the cycle made little difference to persons who really liked to go to market, since it was possible for

(10) Zahan (1954 : 373) apparently found one of the few Mossi informants with a mystical bent; he reports that the seven three-day cycles of markets in the 21-day cycle have the following significance for the Yatenga people: "The first of these numbers explains the cycle of the person (7 symbolizes the complete person: male [to which the Mossi assign the number 3] and female [to which they assign the number 4], the second that of the creation." He believes that each market starts a new cycle, a beginning and an end: "the seventh market signifies the most perfect equilibrium: the one which exists between the universe, mankind, and the divinity." In a footnote he suggests that this sybolism is not too different among the Dogon, who are "ideologically and geographically close to the Mossi." Peter Hammond, who worked in Yatenga, could not find this kind of symbolism.